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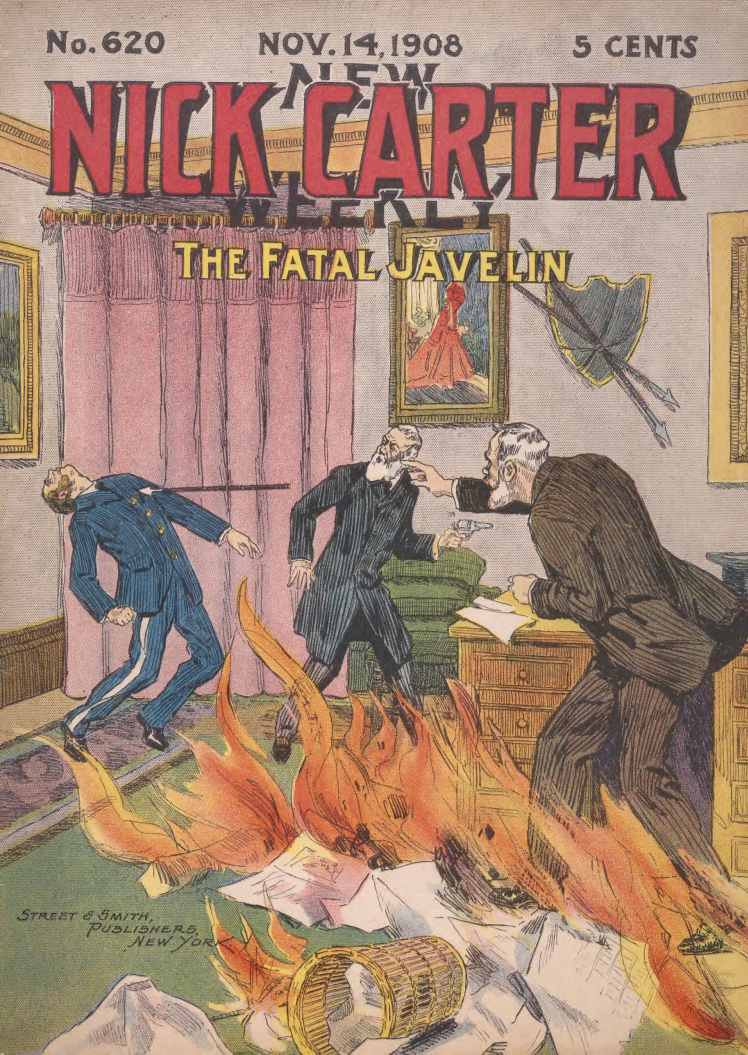
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE FATAL JAVELIN



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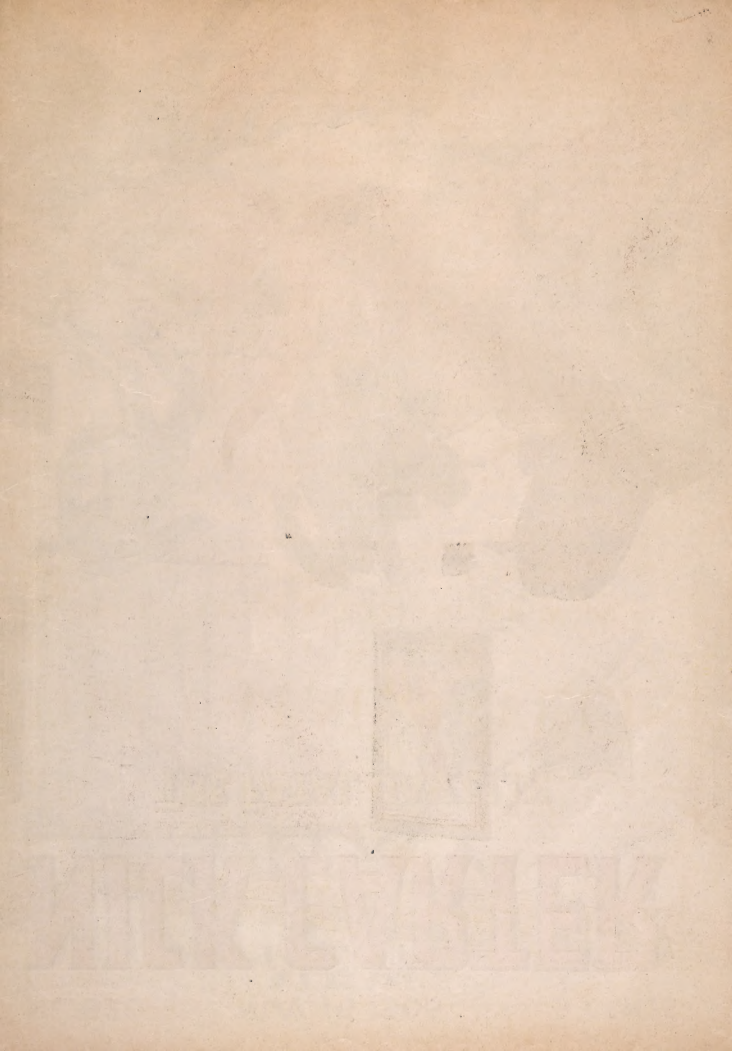

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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THE FATAL JAVELIN;

OR,

NICK CARTER & COMPANY AT WORK.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

"STOP THIEF!"

The Bridgeman Tile Company building stands at the corner of a certain cross-street and lower Fifth Avenue. There is a wide, L-shaped corridor on the street-floor, with elevators near each of the entrances —the one on the avenue, the other on the cross-street before mentioned. These elevators are not in sight of each other.

It was high noon when a sharp, brisk-looking young man, with a bright face and a disarming twinkle in his Irish blue eyes, entered the building by the front, or Fifth Avenue, door.

Naturally, at this hour there was considerable of a crowd in the corridor. The building was an eight-story affair; it covered a goodly area, and it was filled with offices.

The luncheon-hour brought the employed clerks, both male and female, out of these offices like swarming flies on a spring day.

Knowing that these front elevators were the most crowded, and that the office he was bound for, on one of the upper floors, was at the rear anyway, the young man mentioned started through the broad corridor toward the rear.

As he neared the corner in the corridor he heard one of the elevator doors at this end bang open. There was a scattering volley of footsteps on the tiled floor, and around the corner, almost into his very arms, shot a figure.

The young fellow, who had been traveling rapidly himself, with his head down, managed to collide with considerable force with this individual. There was a faint, gasping cry, and he stared down to see a rather frail-looking old gentleman, in a worn overcoat, broad-brimmed hat, and carrying a green cloth bag, sitting on the floor before him, and staring in a stunned way up into his face.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon!" gasped the young fellow, extending both hands to help the old gentleman rise. "Sure, I go stivvering about like a blind toad, so I do! Forgive me, sir!"

As he helped the old man up he could not help but notice his appearance. He had a wild mop of yellowish-white hair that stood out from under the brim of his wrinkled hat like a doormat. His eyebrows were shaggy and yellowish-white, too. His cleanly-shaven

face and lips were very pale and a good deal wrinkled.

He got up panting and gasping, and evidently unable to speak for the moment. Before the unfortunate cause of his overthrow could say another word a wild cry rang down the elevator shafts at this rear end of the building.

"Stop thief! Stop thief!

"Elevator man! Don't let him get away! Don't open the door! Number two elevator. There's a thief aboard!"

"Hello!" ejaculated the young man. "What's up?"

He started to rush into the cross-section of the corridor, but the old gentleman with whom he had collided, clung to him. He seemed unable to stand without assistance.

Meanwhile there was some little confusion around the corner.

"Hold him till I get there!" shrieked the voice above. "Hi! Stop for me, Number one. I must go down—hurry! Don't let him get away below there!"

"Say!" bawled the stentorian drawl of the negro elevator man, evidently the manipulator of Number two elevator. "Yer ain't done tole me w'ich one is de t'ief."

"Hold 'em all!" shouted the voice above. "Wait till I get down."

There was a crash of the sliding elevator doors and the whine of the swiftly descending car. The young fellow who had made the head-on collision, was practically holding the old man up; but he managed to get to the corner, too, where he could see the elevators.

Before the open door of one of them was the negro, holding in his powerful grip a little scared-looking man, whose pale lips were dribbling objections and denials. If *he* was the thief he was the meekest-looking one that was ever "caught with the goods."

Down came the other car, and a frantic-looking man, bare-headed, in his shirt-sleeves, with disarranged tie and collar, his hair wet, and face streaked with water, bounced out.

"Where is he?" he shouted.

"Here he is. I got him," declared the negro proudly.

"What! *Him?*" roared the excited man.

"Ain't dis de t'ief?"

"Nothing like him!" shrieked the other. "You've let him get away. Didn't I tell you not to open the car?"

"But de car *was* done open, sah!" cried the darky. "All de passengers but dis feller was gone."

"You numskull!" exclaimed the injured party. "Do you suppose a thief would be the last to get out of the building?"

He shot a quick glance around at the gathering crowd.

"They all got away, did they?"

"I don't see nobody else, sah," grumbled the negro.

The chief hall man here made his appearance and inquired as to the reason for the row.

"Row enough. I've been robbed! My safe's been broken into in broad daylight. I, myself, have been drugged. And I came out of my trance just in time to see the fellow making his escape in Number two car. Now—— Oh, thunder! No knowing how far he's got."

"Young man, will you give me your arm outside the building?" asked the old gentleman with the green bag, of the one who had collided with him.

"Sure!" exclaimed the other, recalled to his duty, and although he was mightily interested in the robbery, and would have liked above everything to hear the rest of the excited man's story, he turned and helped the victim of his own heedlessness through the long hall to the front of the building.

The excitement continued behind them; but the young fellow found his companion so feeble that he was quite alarmed when they reached the sidewalk.

"Surely, you won't walk, sir?" he asked.

"No, no! Just help me to my car," gasped the old man.

"Gee! You'd better let me get a carriage, sir."

"No, no! My car. My motor-car. There it is yonder."

"Whew!" muttered the young fellow, puckering his lips. "He didn't look the part," and he glanced sideways at the shabby exterior of his companion.

The car in question was a fine, shiny automobile, and a chauffeur in livery sat under the wheel. As the young fellow helped the old man in he could not help remarking how out of place he seemed in the expensive vehicle.

But he had only a moment for such contemplation. The old man sank back on the seat, his eyes half-closed, and seemed unable to speak.

"Say, your boss is in a bad way," said the young fellow to the stiff-necked chauffeur.

The latter turned a stolid countenance upon him.

"Eh?" he asked.

"Your boss has had a shock. By Judas! you're a thick-headed bloke."

"Pardon!"

"You fool!" muttered the other. "Don't you see your boss is sick? Where does he belong? What's his name? He'd ought to have a doctor."

"No, no!" gasped the old gentleman suddenly. "No doctor. I'll be all right in a few minutes."

"Gee! too miserly to pay a doctor, I bet," thought the youth. "Hadn't you better go home, sir?" he asked.

"Yes. I—I think we will go home, James."

"Say! does James know enough to go home?" growled the other doubtfully. "I reckon I'd better step aboard and go with you, governor."

"If—if you'd be so kind," gasped the old man.

And the young man stepped aboard the car and "James" started her.

CHAPTER II.

"TOO LATE FOR THE FAIR."

Now, the young man had an important engagement, and should have kept it, but he was too warm-hearted to desert the old fellow until he knew he was safe in good hands.

But he did find the trip no pleasant one. It seemed endless, too. James appeared to have been brought up driving oxen, and he couldn't run an automobile much faster than he could a pair of steers!

At length, however, they arrived at an up-town cross-street on the West Side, and the machine halted before a rather nice-looking, if old-fashioned, house.

By this time the old man seemed somewhat better. His new friend told him he looked "quite perky," but he made a mental note to tell whoever came to the door that they ought not to let the old fellow out alone.

"Let me give you a hand out, governor," said the young fellow.

The old gentleman was very willing. He leaned heavily on the arm extended, and it was necessary to assist his tottering steps up to the door.

There the young chap was about to ring for him, but the old man stopped him.

"No, no! I'll let myself in—I'll let myself in!" he declared, and drew out a bunch of keys, from which, with shaking hands, he selected one that admitted them.

James had, without command, wheeled immediately away in the auto.

"Gee! I'd ought to have asked the old guy to let his man run me down-town again. I'll certainly be too late to see Peckham," muttered the Good Samaritan.

To his astonishment, no servant appeared in the hall. The house was well-furnished, but seemed to be rather uncared for, and there was a musty smell about the premises, while as he mounted the stairs after the old man, and at his request, the visitor found the dust thick on the bannisters.

"A regular old miser, I'll bet!" he thought. "And he hangs to that old cloth bag as though it held gold certificates."

There was nothing particularly mysterious about the old fellow, however. He invited his helper up to the second floor, and there they entered a big and sunny room, fitted up as half-office, half-library.

This apartment looked rather cheerful. There was more modern furniture. There was a tile-work chimney-piece, in which a gas-log burned. A big safe stood against the wall by the chimney-piece. The farther end of the room was hung with dusty pictures, pipes, a banner or two, and a big dented shield and a sheaf of spears, or javelins, as a center-piece—an incongruous-looking decoration for such a room, and to be the property of such a man as this old fellow.

"Sit down—sit down, young man!" exclaimed the proprietor of all this dusty luxury, faintly. "I—I'll be better in a moment."

He tottered to a cupboard, dropped the green bag out of sight behind the safe, opened the cupboard door, and seized a bottle and spoon, evidently placed there in readiness.

He took a dose of whatever was in the bottle, and then sank into a big armchair before his flat desk and laid his head back for a few moments.

But his eyes were wide open now, and he began to look better almost immediately. A little color crept into his cheeks, and he breathed freer and in longer respirations.

"I—I feel better now—much better," he said, with a sigh.

"Well, boss, I'm mighty sorry I gave you such a bump. Gee! I didn't know but I'd done you serious harm," declared his visitor.

"No, no! It was as much my fault as yours. We ran into each other; and, naturally, two solid bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time—and you are more solid than I. I thank you very much, sir. Will you tell me your name?"

"Huh! Well, I'm mostly called Patsy," said the young fellow, eying him quizzically. "That'll do for

the present, mister. You know I ain't looking to be remembered in your will, or anything like that."

The old man laughed, and evidently in good humor.

"That means that I am to restrain myself to verbal thanks?"

"That's what I'm aiming to express. I shy at being patronized—I always did."

"Well, Patsy, I am too honestly grateful to you to offend you in any such way. I'm glad to have met you. It isn't many young men who are as kind to old ones—especially strangers—as you have been to me.

"My name is Crummles—Israel Crummles. I am not so well supplied with friends that I can afford to lose a chance to make one. I hope you'll remember me, and that you'll come to see me again. I'd be delighted to have you dine with me some night in the near future. Will you give me your address?"

At this request Patsy presented his card. They shook hands, and the young man departed.

"Odd old guy," he thought. "Mebbe I might have made him pay me my car-fare down-town," and he laughed.

It was mid-afternoon when he reached the Bridgeman Tile Company building again. He entered as before, reached the rear elevator, and rode up to the office to which he had been bound. It was locked.

On the door, just under the painted name of its occupant, "Alonzo B. Peckham," was a card, reading:

"Out for the day. Call to-morrow at nine."

"Gee! and that fellow said over the phone that he'd *got* to see one of us to-day. Guess he changed his mind," murmured Patsy reflectively. "I suppose that business always should come before pleasure. Chick'll say I should have let the old geezer go and 'tended to business—especially under the present circumstances."

He remembered the riot about the robbery, as he was going down in the elevator, and he asked the man about it.

"Shore, we dunno wot's been stoled. Dat man wouldn't tell, but he sartainly was kerflummoxed—yaas, sah!"

Patsy made his way home feeling somehow that he had "fallen down." And just at present Patsy, as well as Nick Carter's other young assistants, was on his mettle.

The great detective had found it necessary, for a time, to remain in the background.* He had even, indeed, gone to the extent of having it publicly believed that he was dead!

Indeed, there were several people—and people interested very much in the great detective's movements—who would have been willing to go into court and swear that Nick had died of heart failure, and that he was buried in the private burying-ground of the Carters in a neighboring State.

Meanwhile Chick, Patsy, and even Danny, were straining every effort to handle certain matters that had, of necessity, been left incomplete by Nick himself, as well as to do certain "reckoning up" as ordered by the absent Nick.

The great detective was up against one of the hardest, if not *the* very hardest, problem of his whole career. A master criminal had appeared in New York, and that master criminal had already crossed Nick's path twice.

This man was known as Professor Addison, the seer of second sight.

As to what his powers were, Nick had not as yet formed a decided opinion. He had begun his career by endeavoring to obtain from a very wealthy old man, Mr. George Brent, a large sum of money—the bulk of his fortune, indeed, to speculate with in Wall Street, on the strength of his ability to "see into the future."

Nick had seen farther into the future than Addison, however, on that lay, and had broken up the combination.

The fellow had landed back on Nick, however, in a way that had made the detective sit up and take notice. Addison, in some mysterious way, seemed to learn Nick's intentions, his movements, and his future plans in case after case, and he foiled the sleuth at every corner.

There was no atom of superstition in Nick Carter's make-up, but he had finally come to the conclusion that, if not possessed of supernatural power, Addison certainly had some means of overhearing Nick's plans, and discovering his disguises.

On this conclusion the detective consummated a move the like of which no man had made before. *He died and was buried to throw his enemy off his guard!*

Even Nick's close friends believed that the great detective was no more. His legal representative, with Chick, took charge of affairs, and it was generally understood that Chickering Carter would continue to handle such business as old clients of Nick wished to risk in his hands.

Meanwhile Nick himself was working like the mole,

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 619.

underground and in the dark, to get at the mystery of Professor Addison. His first task had been to discover the whereabouts of Ina Corrette, a very pretty confederate of the seer of second sight, who had, on her own hook, stolen fifty thousand dollars' worth of jewels from Mr. and Mrs. George Kennan. With the information Nick obtained, Chick went to the girl, arrested her for the crime, and secured the return of the jewels to their proper owners.

It was within the fortnight following this episode that, one morning, Chick, in nominal charge of Nick Carter's affairs, was called up on the telephone by a man named Alonzo B. Peckham.

"I have been informed that in spite of the unfortunate demise of Mr. Nicholas Carter, his business is being conducted as usual?" this gentleman said guardedly, after being assured of Chick's identity.

"It is," replied Chick, who refused to discuss the matter of Nick's death with anybody. "Naturally Mr. Carter left some matters unfinished, and we are trying to carry out his plans and complete his work to the best of our ability."

"I think I am one of Mr. Carter's uncompleted jobs," said Mr. Alonzo Peckham grimly. "Have you any record of a matter I brought to Mr. Carter's attention some few weeks before his death?"

"I have found nothing relating to you—that I know of—as yet," declared Chick hesitatingly.

"Well, I want advice, and I think I need a guard of some kind. At the time Mr. Carter said he would make some investigation, but I don't know what he did, or intended doing. At least, I never heard from him.

"I had in my possession, I told him, some valuable papers—*very* valuable papers indeed. I had reason to believe that an attempt was being made by unscrupulous people to rob me of those papers.

"They have, in the course of events, come back into my charge again. Frankly, they are locked in my safe. I scarcely dare leave my office for fear of losing them, and yet I have to keep them in charge for some days. The—the matter is not one to be discussed over the wire."

"I see that," admitted Chick.

"Can you come and see me?"

"I'll send one of my assistants—and a trusted employee of—of Mr. Carter," said Chick. "You can speak to him fully," and he told Mr. Peckham how he would know Patsy when he arrived.

He called Patsy in, but made little explanation of the matter to him.

"Skin down to the Bridgeman Tile Company building, and see A. B. Peckham, on such a floor," said Chick. "Find out what he wants of us, and look sharp, will you, Patsy?"

"That's me, Chick!" returned the other, and set forth at once.

We have seen how he did the errand. If he had had any warning regarding the nature of the matter on which he had been sent, things might have turned out differently.

At least, he would not have come to Mr. Peckham's office and found that gentleman gone; nor would he have come back to the house again, entered the office to report, and been met by Chick, who said, in no pleasant tone:

"Well, by George, Patsy! Too late for the fair again, were you?"

"What's eating you, Chick?" demanded the other.

"Where have you been? You didn't find Mr. Peckham, I warrant?"

"No, I didn't."

"Were you at his office at all?"

"Just came from there."

"How'd you come?"

"Subway."

"Well, he must have just left before your call. He's on his way here now."

"Huh!" grunted Patsy. "I thought you said there was something the matter so that he couldn't leave his office."

"There was. He was afraid of being robbed."

"Hul-lo!" murmured Patsy, staring at Chick.

"But he is afraid no longer."

"No?"

"I—should—say—not," drawled Chick. "After the horse is stolen no need to lock the barn. The man has already been robbed. He seems to be pretty nearly crazy. While you've been gallivanting around, the goodness knows where, the very thing he was afraid of took place. Ha! here's Joseph. What is it?" and he extended his hand for the card the valet brought in.

"Here he is now, by Jove!" exclaimed Chick, reading the card. "'Mr. Alonzo B. Peckham.' Bring him up, Joseph."

CHAPTER III.

THE PAPERS IN THE CASE.

"Oh, gee!" muttered Patsy, and fell into a chair.

The man whom Joseph ushered in Patsy had seen

before—he had seen him wild, disheveled, and apparently half-drowned, in the hall of the Bridgeman Tile Company building.

Mr. Peckham was an excitable man at best. He was slight, with a big head and bushy hair, and now he was extremely pale and his eyes looked wild.

"I don't know why I come here! I don't suppose you can help me at all! I—I am distracted!" cried Mr. Peckham, before even he was seated.

"Let's hear about it, sir," advised Chick. "You are safe to speak here. This is the young man who was to see you. He missed connections," and he waved an introductory hand toward Patsy.

"I wish you'd got there! I wish you *had*, young man!" groaned Peckham. "When—when he came into the office I thought it *was* you. I was expecting you, you know."

"*Who* came in?" asked Chick, trying to get at the start of the man's story.

"That scoundrel who drugged me."

"And robbed you?"

"He did indeed!" declared Peckham. "Oh, the wretch!"

"Say! what did he get?" broke in Patsy.

"He got papers, plans, specifications, and explanations of the most wonderful invention I verily believe that was ever attempted or thought of by mankind!" declared Peckham solemnly.

Patsy and Chick exchanged glances. This began to sound like a remarkable story.

"Are you the inventor of this—er—wonderful thing?" asked Chick.

"No, no! The inventor is dead. I am merely the administrator of his estate. And the estate consists almost wholly of his rights in the invention."

"Has it been patented, or put on the market?" queried Chick.

"Mr. Carter," said Peckham seriously, "to explain this matter fully so that you will understand it, I must begin my story some time back. I will say that it is *not* patented, that I doubt if such a thing could be patented. It is the result of years and years of thought and experiment and investigation on the part of the late Doctor Leith Morray—you have heard of him?"

"An eminent scientist," said Chickering thoughtfully. "An astronomer, was he not?"

"If he had lived five hundred years ago he would have been called an astrologer, too," said Peckham, nodding his head. "But there was nothing of the charletan about him—no indeed, sir!

"He was my father's personal friend. My father, gentlemen, was an old-time lawyer. I studied for the bar, but finally became interested in southern lands—real estate—and I deal in realties almost entirely now.

"But Doctor Morray always insisted that I should attend to such little legal matters as he had, and in the end made me sole executor of his estate.

"I believe my father knew something about these experiments that the scientist made. My father was an eminently practical man. If, on passing to the great beyond, he had the felicity of being entered at the Golden Gate, I think that he would probably test it with acid before going through. My father never took a thing on trust in his life, gentlemen—saving death itself!

"Therefore, whenever I heard the old gentleman mention Doctor Morray's life work—his secret life work, I mean—he spoke of it pityingly. He believed that every man had two natures—the sane one and another that was more or less maniacal.

"He counted the doctor's experiments as so much waste of time and money. And it *did* seem so. Doctor Morray spent all his fortune, and his wife's fortune, which should have gone to his children—a boy and two girls—and in the end died penniless, leaving his children—the mother was dead—nothing but the papers relating to his experiments."

"But what *is* the invention? Is it a machine?" asked Chick.

"It is a machine; but it is more than a machine, too. The visible, practical parts of the instrument he built—it is known that he built one—could be patented. But, sir, can you patent the waves of ether that carry the Marconi messages?"

"Hardly!" exclaimed Patsy, while Chick shook his head slowly, a puzzled frown on his brow.

"No! and so the *system* that Doctor Morray invented cannot be controlled, or covered, by patents.

"The papers explaining, verifying, proving the whole scheme, were placed in my hands by the old scientist on his death-bed. He realized then—he awoke from his dream—that he had injured his children. He left them, indeed, almost penniless.

"But in the hands of the right people, with money to carry out Doctor Morray's plans, the invention should win a great fortune for its promoters."

"But what *is* the invention?" asked Chick again.

Peckham frowned, looked around a moment, and then said:

"Without the plans, and a better knowledge than I possess of science, it would be difficult for me to make you understand anything regarding the laws govern-

ing this great discovery. Whatever I say will sound foolish in your ears.

"But mark me: *It is not foolish!* Upon perusal of the papers at first, I firmly believed that the thing was either impossible or that my understanding had gone wrong. But a second reading convinced me that the idea was feasible. The only thing missing is the actual plan of the one machine he built, and the nature of its management.

"I was so greatly disturbed by my discoveries that I went to a reputable physician. I told him frankly that I had come into the possession of manuscripts that, if they were true, would practically revolutionize the world—that would change human communications entirely. That two people, attuned to the same mental or spiritual key, could communicate—even see each other—despite the barrier of time and space!

"I told my medical man this, and then asked him if he considered me on the verge of mental collapse—if, in his opinion, I had imagined these things, or was verging on insanity in any particular?

"He put me through a rigid examination. He declared me to be perfectly sane, although of an excitable temperament. He advised me to read the papers I had mentioned no more, and forget about them.

"I came away from him, gentlemen, convinced that I had read Doctor Morray's plans aright. The matter is bound to be the wonder and marvel of this marvelous age!

"But now, mark you: I do not claim to know, or to understand, the practical workings of Doctor Morray's wonderful discovery. And I believe there is only one person alive to-day who knows any more about it than I do.

"The doctor, for some years, had an assistant in his laboratory. He was a man of marvelous mechanical ingenuity; but Doctor Morray trusted nobody—not even Eugene Siddel—the assistant's name—with the full particulars of the scheme he was working out.

"In fact, the doctor kept his theory and the mechanical apparatus that was to be used to make his theory practical entirely separate.

"Eugene Siddel built, under the doctor's instructions, the only apparatus designed to put to practical uses the wonderful discovery. He built it, he may even have known of its workings and something of the wonderful things to be expected of the machine. *But the nut of the whole matter he did not get!*

"When Doctor Morray was stricken with his last illness, Eugene Siddel disappeared, and with him went the apparatus.

"There was really much mystery surrounding the old gentleman's illness and death. I believe Doctor Morray himself thought he had been poisoned by some insidious drug, for which he, nor the physicians, could find no antidote. And I believe he suspected Siddel.

"The scoundrel had secured the machine. He might even know how to make some use of it. He is a sharp and ingenious rascal, as I have said—and have bitter reason now to appreciate," added Peckham, shaking his head.

"But as I understand it the machine he made and stole works arbitrarily—seemingly it performs marvels without reason. Siddel does not know *why* the instrument does what it accomplishes.

"Do you see the situation? He has in his possession the one machine built to carry out Doctor Morray's ideas. That apparatus, when set into motion, will, as the doctor's papers fully and finally declare, do the most astonishing things. See here!" cried Peckham, jumping up and striding over to the party-wall between this and the next house.

He struck the wall solidly—a blow with his fist.

"Is that a firm barrier? Is that a solid wall? Is that brick and plaster, gentlemen? Then, appreciate the marvel of what I solemnly declare: Doctor Morray's discovery makes that wall as though it were not there!

"You see it. Its bulk and apparent opaqueness is there; but with the machine which he had built to make practical his discovery we could see directly into the next house, hear what was being said there, and see every act of its inmates.

"Sounds like an 'Arabian Nights' tale, doesn't it? You half-believe me crazy, don't you? But I am telling you the simple truth!

"Eugene Siddel has the apparatus that will do that. But only in the papers in my care was it explained *why* and *how* the apparatus worked—and the plans for building the machine had gone with the machine itself.

"Do you see? I had the voluminous explanation of the marvel, and the results of experiment after experiment. Eugene Siddel had the machine and the drawings by which the machine had been built.

"The one could do little without the other. Siddel might use the machine; but he never could learn how he got the results he did! On the other hand, as executor of the estate, I could interest no capital in the

enterprise, and make nothing of Doctor Morray's great invention for the help of his children, without the plans for the building of the instrument.

"When I first called Mr. Nicholas Carter's attention to the case, I did not go into this explanation. I merely said that I had very valuable papers that I had reason to believe were a cause of temptation to this Eugene Siddel. I had learned then that he was trying to steal them from me.

"Meanwhile I trusted them in the hands of a very wealthy man, who expressed some interest in the affair. He can be encouraged to experiment with the matter, if an apparatus can be built—no doubt of it.

"Last night the papers came back into my hands. And immediately I saw that I was being followed and watched again. Siddel is a man of unscrupulous courage and ingenuity. I feared molestation as I wired you this morning.

"And yet, although I feared him, and expected an attempt to steal the papers at any moment, he accomplished his object. I was robbed this noon, gentlemen, and every scrap of writing regarding Doctor Morray's great experiments and discoveries is now, I fully believe, in the criminal Siddel's hands!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROBBERY.

Chick and Patsy would really have liked to retire at this point and compare notes. Whether this man was wholly sane or not was a question in both their minds.

But the interest both displayed proved that what he said held their attention.

And there was more to tell, too. Chick reminded the almost breathless Peckham of it:

"And how about the robbery, sir?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"How was it accomplished? Who did it? Did this Eugene Siddel himself come and take the papers? And you spoke of being drugged."

Alonzo B. Peckham shook his head sadly.

"I am convinced," he said, "that I am not a madman. I have had medical testimony on *that* score. But that I *am* an idiot I will admit!

"There is a difference!

"Looking, as I was, for some attempt by Siddel, or his emissaries, to get those papers, I should have locked my door as well as my safe and waited for your man, or the police, to arrive.

"But habits of business, gentlemen—well, enough to say that I was tempted by what seemed a chance to make a good thing for myself. We dealers in realties have to know when to take a chance—and we have to know when a good offer is made us.

"Into my office at eleven-thirty this morning walked a man I had never seen before. He was a bluff-looking, farmerish-looking chap, who walked as though his heavy-soled boots might have followed the plow, and he was tanned deeply. He was bluff, bewhiskered, and a straight-from-the-shoulder sort of a chap in appearance.

"He offered me the card of a real-estate man in West Virginia whom I know. You must understand that Virginia and West Virginia lands are on the boom just now.

"This man—the name he gave doesn't matter, as you can rest assured it wasn't his own—said he had a farm for sale and wanted to get rid of it in a hurry.

"His brother had gone to the Klondike, made good, and sent for him to come up. He was starting in a week. Would I make him an offer for his farm?

"The deeds appeared to be all right. Of course I should have had them looked up and titles proven. He gave me a cigar—he was smoking, himself—and I lit up, and we talked.

"In five minutes, gentlemen, *I was dead to the world!*

"What there was in that cigar I don't know. I doubt if the Tobacco Trust could have told!

"But it put me to sleep, all right. I remember of being so overpoweringly sleepy that what the chap said made practically no impression on me at all. I dropped over, with my head on the desk.

"Then he went to work. He must either have obtained the combination of my safe—although not a soul knows it but myself, and I never trust it to paper—or else he possesses the delicate ear that they say some locksmiths have—and some burglars. By listening to the clicking of the lock as he twirled the handle, he must have learned how it was set.

"Anyway, I suddenly started up. I knew that the safe was open and that there was another person in the room. But I could not regain my faculties clearly enough to know what he was doing—or who was there.

"I must have felt that there was something wrong,

however. I staggered to the basin and doused my head and face with water from the faucet.

"In the basin was a puddle of muddy brown water. Afterward I realized that the robber had washed the stain off his face and hands there.

"And in the corner was the hard hat, rough suit, and false whiskers of my farmer visitor!

"I woke up, then. I remembered that at the very instant I was dousing my head the door of the office snapped to. The thief had just that instant completed his work and gone!

"You may believe that I rushed into the hallway at that, yelling 'stop thief!' with all my might," added Peckham.

"I can swear to *that*," muttered Patsy.

"The Number two elevator had just started down, after stopping at my floor. I ran to hold it. Then I yelled to the coon to hold the passengers till I could get down.

"But the thick-headed moke did nothing of the kind. He let 'em all go but a little fellow about half the size of the thief. And—there you are!

"The papers are gone. He took nothing else from the safe. He knew just what he wanted. If it wasn't Siddel then it was somebody in his employ.

"That's the story, gentlemen. And it's not a pleasant story for me to have to relate to the son and daughters of Doctor Morray—you understand? Besides, the formula, instructions, plans, etc., together with the apparatus itself, in the hands of a criminally inclined man like Eugene Siddel, gives him a power for evil that make me tremble to think of!

"Look you! They say that when Gutenberg discovered the art of printing with interchangeable types, he was accorded a vision of both the harm and good that printing might do for the peoples of the world if he made his invention known.

"Doctor Morray must have had something like Gutenberg's experience. He hesitated to give his discoveries to the world. But, like the inventor of printing, he finally determined that the possible good to the world of his invention, if properly safeguarded, would overbalance the possible evil.

"But here a declared criminal—a thief—has gained control of the whole matter. I know that the doctor's heirs would rather have had the papers destroyed entirely than fall in such hands.

"What can you do for me, gentlemen? Something must be done immediately. Siddel must be captured—or the papers discovered—within a short time, or, I tell you earnestly, the entire fabric of society will be undermined!

"In his hands, and through him, the criminal classes will have the advantage of this new power. They will be stronger than the decent citizens. The police will be unable to control them, because they will have a foreknowledge of the movements and intentions of the police——"

"By heavens!" ejaculated Chick, under his breath, "that's exactly the way Nick talked. That's what he suggested to me before—before his dropping out. What does this mean, anyway? *Have I found the clue?*"

CHAPTER V.

DANNY MAKES A FRIEND.

These mutterings on Chick's part were unheard by his companions. Peckham was too much engaged with his own woes, and Patsy was doing some rapid thinking.

"What can be done now, gentlemen?" queried the robbed real-estate man again.

"You do not feel yourself in any personal danger now, do you, Mr. Peckham?" asked Chick quietly.

"No, no! I can thank my stars that the scoundrel did not kill me, as I verily believe he did Doctor Morray. But there's no need for him to injure me now. He has the papers."

"Then can you leave it all in our hands for—say—a couple of days?"

"And meanwhile he will become entrenched in his possession of the documents. He may make copies of them. He may put the theory and the practical workings of the apparatus to some terrible use. Oughtn't we to go to the police?"

"Well, do you think the police will do any better?" demanded Chick dryly. "If you have an idea that they can get results any quicker than we can, go ahead. But remember one thing, Mr. Peckham, Nick Carter never took a case unless he had freedom from police interference, and *we* shall not try to better his methods.

"If you want the police called in, call them. But don't expect our help, too. Our methods are not ordinary police methods, and we would only clash.

"Make your choice, sir. Give the matter over to us for forty-eight hours. If we report no progress then, why, you are at liberty to call in the regular force. Is it a bargain?"

With some hesitation Mr. Peckham agreed. The

moment he had been shown out by Joseph, Chick turned on his comrade.

"Now, Patsy, tell me what kept you from making Peckham's office at the right time?"

Patsy related his adventure with the strange old gentleman, Israel Crummles, and Chick listened to the recital without comment until the end. Then he demanded:

"And what do you think of it? Was it a plant, Patsy?"

"Crummles a plant?"

"That's what I mean. It looks confounded strange, you know, Patsy."

"But, hang it, man!" cried the other, "how can it be? I certainly ran into the old geezer and knocked him down. The meeting was totally unexpected. And I never saw him before—that I know of.

"Of course he might have been this Siddel Peckham speaks of—but mighty well disguised, don't you forget that!

"Now, it stands to reason," pursued Patsy, "that when a man disguises himself he isn't going to pick out a character to represent that will be so peculiar that a casual observer would remark it."

"Humph! No *ordinary* crook would do that, I admit," said Chick.

"Then, if Crummles is Siddel——"

"Don't jump at that conclusion so quick," grinned Chick.

"Hang it! why did you start me on it, then? I'd thought of the idea more than once while Peckham was telling his yarn. But I don't see why it seems probable. I didn't have to go with the old man in his auto. He didn't ask me.

"And I'll swear by all that's good the second before he came around that corner in the hall and slammed into me—or I slammed into him—he didn't know that I was there," declared Patsy vigorously.

"We-ell," murmured Chick thoughtfully. "My idea is that we'd better look up Crummles as a chance, anyway. Of course, he may be all right. Such a peculiar chap must be easy to reckon up. Meanwhile, you know, I must communicate with—with *him*."

"I suppose this is a serious case," admitted Patsy, in a lowered tone. "And he said——"

"Only in case of serious matters—or those relating to that Addison and his affairs—should we run the risk of communicating with *him*," grunted Chick.

"How are you going to do it?" whispered Patsy.

Chick drew a sheet of paper toward him and carefully wrote the following:

"Must deliver goods. On the odd hours."

He shoved this enigmatical line over to Patsy.

"Put that in your pocket and, as you go up-town, have it inserted in the 'Personals' in to-morrow morning's *Herald*. *He* will see it, and one of us will be passing the Metropole Hotel, opposite the *Times* building, on the stroke of the odd hours to-morrow, beginning with nine a. m. Do you see?"

"Sure!"

"If *he* doesn't accost us to-morrow, we'll insert the ad again and again, and keep the appointments until *he* does show up. That's the agreement," whispered Chick.

"Now, you take Danny and the car and see what you can find out about this Crummles. I'll go down and interview the people at Peckham's building. Maybe somebody spotted the thief and noted which way he went, after all."

And so the conference between Nick Carter's two assistants ended.

Patsy knew what had been cut out for him, and he needed no further instructions from Chick. He had worked too long with Nick Carter himself not to understand that there were certain well-established rules to follow in this process of "reckoning up."

One way in which to learn about Mr. Israel Crummles was to attempt to "connect" with his business acquaintances—as he seemed to be a man of affairs—learn his rating among merchants, where he had his office—if he had any—what his business was, and what were his family associations.

Another way was to look up the tradesmen in the locality where Mr. Crummles resided, and find out from them what manner of man he was, and what was known of him in the immediate neighborhood.

As the day was waning, and offices and down-town stores were closing soon, it was easier, Patsy decided—and perhaps more practicable—to learn first what was locally known about Israel Crummles.

While Danny went around to the garage after the car, Patsy looked into the directory for the name Crummles. He did not find it. But that was not so very strange. Many people—especially wealthy folk—do not have their names in the city directory.

When Danny arrived with the car Patsy, in his automobile outfit, would scarcely have been recognized by Mr. Crummles—unless that gentleman had very sharp eyes indeed!

At this time Nick Carter possessed two cars, but he had an arrangement with the license bureau and the police that neither was listed under his name. This precluded the easy identification of his vehicles when he chanced to be on a case where the use of a car was necessary.

Patsy instructed Danny to take in Herald Square on their way up-town, and he hopped out himself at the newspaper office, took in Chick's peculiarly worded ad, and paid for its insertion.

When he came back to the car he got in beside the chauffeur and said:

"Danny, I've a feeling in my interior that says this old Crummles has bats in his belfry, and nothing worse. But we'll look him over, just the same, and it's too bad if a couple of chaps like you and me can't find out if there's anything more than a harmless twist in his mental machinery—eh?"

"True for you, sir," declared Danny. "And I've a thought that might help us a wee bit."

"Out with the thought! Don't let it get frost-bitten in that vacuum of a head of yours—for they say a vacuum is at mighty low temperature!"

Danny serenely overlooked this chaff, and said:

"While you're doing your rubbering, it's me that'll find the garage in the neighborhood. If the old man has a car, and a chauffeur, they'll both be at some garage, it's likely. Eh?"

"A grand good idea, Danny!" declared Patsy. "I'd like to see you getting acquainted with James. He'd warm up to you about as quick as the side of an iron gas-house if you built a bonfire against it! He's the coldest proposition I ever saw. Why, if that old geezer had died in the car to-day I believe, on my life, all James would have done would be to have changed his direction to the morgue, and dumped him there."

They halted on the avenue nearest to Crummles' house, where there were stores in plenty. Patsy got out to canvas the neighborhood, while Danny asked a policeman about the garage.

"Sure, there's two," said the cop, and told him where each was located.

"I'm looking for the one where Mr. Crummles' car is kept," said Danny. "I'm wanting to see his shoofer, James."

"Crummles? Crummles? Not the queer old duck around here on ——th Street? He's got the old Roder house."

"It's not Crummles I knows much about," admitted Danny doubtfully. "But it's the lad wor-rkin' for him."

"He has a car. I know it. And the guy that runs it looks like a graven image. Ain't got scurce a civil word out of him."

"That's James!" exclaimed Danny, as though he recognized his friend from the description.

"If that's the feller," said the cop, "he keeps the car around in Blenner's old stable. It's a garage now."

"Thanks!" returned Danny, and sped around to the number and street the officer gave him.

It wasn't a large garage, but it was at the hour when most of the machines were in, and the chauffeurs were either just off duty or going on for the evening. It didn't take Danny a minute to pick out James after the explanation both Patsy and the police officer had given him of Mr. Israel Crummles' chauffeur.

Danny picked him out to address his inquiries to, likewise.

"Say! Can I get to put up this car here for an hour or two, d'ye know?" he asked the stiff and stately James. "Me boss has got a date in the neighborhood, and I've got to get me supper, and you know what happens to the brass work of a car when ye leave it unwatched on the street. Sure, I've had the car 'most skinned by the kids while I was in a house once."

"I do not know, sir. You might leave it here," said James, with a tinge of doubt in his voice, and questioning Danny with his lack-luster eyes.

James was a pudding-headed-looking man. He was English, and would have made an excellent stage butler or footman. He was indeed the accepted picture of an English servant.

"Say, sport!" said Danny, more confidentially. "I tell yer what! You fix it for me so's the old tan-box will be safe here, and I'll blow yer to supper. My boss is lib-ral. Off work, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir," said James quietly. "I do not have to report until later in the evening."

The thing was done. James led Danny to a restaurant in the neighborhood, and they made a good meal. The eating and drinking finally warmed through the outer frost of James' demeanor. But he was a mighty cautious individual in his speech.

He was an Englishman—yes. He had served his present master some time. Danny did not dare suggest any interest in Crummles, saving such as would naturally come to the mind of any serving-man.

Yes, James was suited with his place, though it was not a very pleasant situation in some ways.

"There's very little female society, don't you know. We have but one old woman in the house, and we dine hout," said James, shaking his head.

Danny gathered, likewise, that Crummles was a very rich man, but peculiar. He had no family, lived practically alone, and, although he seemed to have varied business interests, he attended to all their details himself.

"Hand 'e's not what you'd call a 'ealthy man, either," declared James, shaking his head. "'E's a bit of a miser, I fancy."

James was as responsive as a brick wall; but perhaps Danny got on with him as well as anybody could. They separated finally with a stiff and formal handshake on James' part, and much warmth on Danny's side.

Then the detective took his car around the square and picked up Patsy, as agreed.

"What did you learn?" queried Patsy. "Did that iceberg open up?"

"I made a beginning. If I see him again he'll know me," returned Danny grimly, and then went on to tell the crumbs of information James had vouchsafed.

"Well, I learned as much from two or three of the storekeepers," said Patsy reflectively. "He lives alone there, all right. He hasn't occupied the house more than two months. Hires it. I saw the agent who handled the property. It's on yearly lease, and the first six months' rent paid in advance in lieu of any reference. He doesn't know what business Crummles is in. Think's he's a money-lender on the sly. But everybody thinks that of a man who seems to be miserly. I know one thing, he may have had nothing to do with Peckham's papers; but, by George! there's something queer about the old geezer."

CHAPTER VI.

CHICK ON THE TRAIL.

Chickering Carter had not taken Patsy entirely into his confidence regarding Peckham and his story. Indeed, at the time there had been no opportunity for extended discussion.

The story Peckham had told of the wonderful discovery of the dead scientist, Doctor Morray, might have done no more than amaze the ever practical chief assistant of Nick Carter and suggest to his mind that, despite the "private lunacy commission" that Peckham declared had investigated his case, there really was a good deal the matter with the robbed man's brain, had it not been for the great matter which kept Nick himself under cover.

Their chief had declared that Professor Addison, the seer of second sight, had some mysterious means of learning his—Nick's—plans before the detective could put them in operation!

Likewise, on one occasion at least Addison had exposed Nick in one of his most effectual disguises.

So important did Nick consider these mysteries that the great detective had devoted his entire time to the solving of the problem, before he would deliberately take up any new case.

To this end Nick Carter had disappeared in the most effectual way possible. He did not merely go away and leave Addison and other enemies "guessing"; he effaced himself from the world and from public remembrance, so as to completely hoodwink Addison, or whoever it was who had the marvelous ability of keeping such close tabs on his movements.

Nick had, in fact, died, to all intents and purposes. He had been buried in his family lot, and, although he had appeared before his followers in the character of an old friend of theirs, Doctor Menlow—the doctor was himself in Europe—neither Chick nor the other boys knew where Nick was hiding.

Nick had warned them all to keep up the appearance of mourning. Everything they did was to be done just as though he really were no more—as though in reality Nick Carter was in the Land of Shades!

They were particularly instructed neither by word nor look, in the privacy of the house or elsewhere, to suggest that he really was not a dead man!

When Chick and Patsy had spoken together of informing Nick of this strange matter of the loss of Peckham's strange papers, they had not mentioned their chief by name.

But to Chick himself had come a great idea while he had listened to Peckham's story.

The idea of Doctor Morray's discovery, which made it possible—according to Peckham's declaration—for the user of the wonderful apparatus to see through the walls of houses, for instance, just as the X-ray allows a surgeon to see into the interior of his patient's anatomy, smote Chick as something that should be instantly brought to Nick's attention.

He, no more than Nick, did not believe in any supernatural power claimed by Professor Addison, the seer of second sight. The scoundrel had done sev-

eral wonderful things by this claimed power; but the detectives had been unshaken in their opinion.

Even when Nick had decided that Addison was so dangerous a force that he must fight him in an entirely unheard-of way, he did not admit the criminal possessed any power that mortal had not owned before.

And the fact that Nick, in posing as a dead man, and being buried in that way, had fooled Addison, showed indeed that the seer of second sight had nothing more than human intelligence.

As soon as Nick had effaced himself from his ordinary haunts, and it was generally believed that he was dead, he was able to balk Addison and his confederates. His first work had been to find Ina Corrette and send Chick to arrest her and recover for Mr. Kennan the fifty thousand dollars' worth of gems the girl had stolen.

The punishment of the girl still hung fire, and now Nick was probably hard after Addison himself.

What Peckham had told them, however, and the story of the stolen papers and apparatus, suggested to Chick that Eugene Siddel, Doctor Morray's dishonest assistant, and Addison, might be one and the same person.

If there was any truth in Peckham's story of the wonderful, but little-known, discovery of the dead scientist, Addison might have used the mysterious apparatus to obtain inside information of the doings of Nick Carter and his assistants!

Improbable, of course! But so was the telegraph, telephone, electric light, submarine boat, flying machine, X-ray—indeed, every other invention of the last fifty years was pronounced improbable—aye, *impossible*—before it became a fact.

At least, Chick knew enough to make his plans to meet Nick as soon as possible and pass the information along to him.

Meanwhile, Chick had elected to take the end of the inquiry which had the most direct bearing upon the robbery that had been pulled off that day—supposedly by Eugene Siddel—in the Bridgeman Tile Company building.

Chick arrived at the place an hour before closing-time—before the closing-time of the general run of offices, at least. He had a well-defined idea of the inquiries he should make, and, after speaking for a time with the boss hallman and learning that he knew absolutely nothing about the robbery saving from hearsay, he had the elevator man of No. 2 excused from his car, and, jamming him into a corner, put a series of questions to that darky well calculated to harrow up his soul, and no mistake!

But the black *did* remember most of the people who had come down with him on that particular trip in the elevator. The little man the negro had caught was a stranger to him, but he told Chick the names of several of the habitués of the building who had likewise been in the car.

"Do you remember a man named Crummles—Israel Crummles?" queried Chick.

"Shore, boss, I never hearn tell of dat name—nossir!" declared the negro.

"He's an old man," Chick went on imperturbably, and explained the appearance of Crummles as Patsy had given it to him—even to the old, green, lawyer's bag that the strange man carried.

"Oh, shore; boss! I know dat old man," said the darky. "He been comin' here a lot lately—shore he has."

"And wasn't he in the car with you on that trip?"

"Now I remembers, boss! Jest as plain as plain! Shore he was with us."

"Don't you remember too much," warned Chick gruffly. "I want to know if he has an office here?"

"Nossir, he don't. Not as I knows on, sah. I ain't never heard his name befo'."

"But you say he's here frequently?"

"Yes, sah."

"What office does he go to?"

"Why, I dunno jest dat, sah. But he us'ally goes ter de eighth floor."

"Sure?"

"Yes, sah! I'se shore 'nough. An' I t'inks he goes to de offis of de Maine and Michigan Lumber Company, sah."

"Good," said Chick, noting down this name. "Now, tell me: Where is Mr. Peckham's office?"

"On de sevent' floor, sah."

"H'm! Now, can you keep your mouth shut?"

"Golly!" and the darky's eyes rolled when he saw the bank-notes in Chick's hand. "I t'ink I kin remember ter say nuffin ter nobody if yer gives me *dat*."

"It's a bargain," said Chick grimly. "See that you remember the agreement," and he went up to the office of the lumber company in question.

"Of course," ruminated Chick, "it would not have been hard for that fellow to skip up one flight of stairs after robbing Peckham and take that car where he has been used to taking it. Of course, this is considering Crummles the guilty party.

"Peckham says he believes the robber left his office

after he partially came to from the effect of the drug in the cigar he was given to smoke. And that he would barely have had time to get to the elevator before he himself was in the hall.

"But Peckham was confused—no doubt of that. Somebody else might have boarded the elevator on his floor, while the real robber sneaked up the stairs and took it above.

"Now! The question arises, *was* Crummles the guilty party? Why not somebody else, who quietly stepped either up-stairs or down, and perhaps did not take that particular elevator at all?

"Of course, Patsy said the old man who fell into his arms was in a deuce of a hurry as he came around the corner of the lower corridor, and the darky says that Crummles was one of the passengers aboard on that particular down-trip.

"A robber who could change his appearance so well need not have hurried at all after getting out of Peckham's sight.

"If Crummles is guilty, and he was smart enough to turn the trick he did, it seems as though he would have been smart enough not to worry about being caught. Humph! Here's the Maine and Michigan Lumber Company. Let's see what they know about Crummles."

This information was easily gained. The instant Chick met the manager of the office and stated his business, mentioning the fact that he wanted to learn something about Mr. Israel Crummles, the manager began to laugh.

"By Jove, sir! Is that old fellow stringing you, too?" he asked. "I believe he has a nut loose somewhere, and that his wheels are likely to fall off and ditch him at almost any time. Did you ever see such a persistent old codger?"

"I understand he has some peculiarities," admitted Chick quietly. "Who is he—*what* is he?"

"Hands up! I couldn't tell you that on oath," declared the man.

"But what's his business with you?"

"He's trying to sell us some timber land in Maine that I find out doesn't exist. The old codger doesn't know it, I really believe! I think he's honest enough. But somebody's done him—and done him bad.

"It seems he's got deeds of a track of oak and hickory—so reads the papers—that some fake promoter has sawed off onto him for a good sum. And blame me if the supposed woodland isn't in the middle of one of Maine's big lakes!

"I hate to tell the old codger how badly he's fooled. I told him only to-day not to come around again—that we wouldn't buy at any price——"

"Then he *was* here to-day?" asked Chick.

"Sure!"

"About noon?"

"Why—er—I believe so. Before noon. Just before I went to luncheon, anyway."

"I am trying to find out just when he left your office. Can't tell me that, can you?"

The manager looked at the inquirer queerly, but asked no questions. He tried to gain the information Chick wanted from his clerks.

But nothing positive was to be learned. Chick was forced to depart without making his point clear regarding the time that Crummles left the lumber company office.

"Shucks!" ejaculated Chick. "Perhaps we're beating out straw to find grain. There may be nothing in it. Crummles may be as innocent as the babe unborn. And, to tell the truth, as far as I have learned during this inquiry, we may be wronging the old fellow by our suspicions.

"If he *is* the guilty man, he's as sharp as they make 'em. He's laid his plans for weeks. He's been coming here almost every day so that his appearance would not excite suspicion.

"In addition, he's had business here so that, if inquiry were made, he might show a clean bill of health. *If he* is Siddel, or the man whom Peckham said robbed him, he is a mighty cute actor, and a wonderful fellow altogether—no doubt of that," concluded Chick, shaking his head.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

The news that Patsy and Danny brought home did not aid Chick much in getting into the heart of the mystery, either. Nothing was certain about Israel Crummles.

"Mebbe we're wasting time and the real fellow who copped the papers is hot-footing it out of the country," said Patsy, in disgust. "Gee, Chick! just because that old gazabo ran into me, it don't seem reasonable that he is the thief."

"And it doesn't seem *un*-reasonable to suppose that you were intentionally kept away from taking hold of the robbery while the trail was hot," said Chick promptly.

"Was I?" muttered Patsy gloomily.

"You certainly took the old man home."

"And I didn't need do it. 'Twas off me own bat."

"Humph!" ejaculated Chick, with a smile. "If we who help Nick Carter are as well known to these folks as Nick himself, they'll be wise, as you say, to our characters. The old man might figure pretty closely just what you'd do under such circumstances, Patsy. You know, your warm Irish heart——"

"Has carried me into more trouble than a little, eh? Is *that* what you mean?" demanded Patsy, with some asperity.

"I didn't say it," chuckled Chick.

"But you meant it!" exclaimed Patsy.

"That's putting it too harshly, old man."

"I tell you what," said Patsy, somewhat offended. "Danny and I have a hunch that there may be something in this Crummles game, after all. Anyway, he's got a date with James, the chauffeur, and I hope to be invited up to dinner by the old man some day before long. Perhaps we'll turn a trick to surprise you, Chick."

"I hope you'll turn it mighty quick, then," muttered Chick, with a serious frown. "This robbery is, I believe, a serious matter."

"I hope *he* turns up all right to-morrow," said Patsy. "We're like a ship without a rudder when *he's* not here to boss things."

"Sh!" said Chick sharply, looking around quickly as though he expected somebody was near enough to overhear them.

* * * * * * *

Down Broadway the man with the hammer struck nine bell-like notes on the front of the *Herald* building. So clear was the morning that the notes were audible to Chick as he paced slowly up the block between Forty-first and Forty-second Streets.

Broadway at this hour is more like a village main street than the busy thoroughfare of the metropolis. At two o'clock in the morning there are likely to be more people abroad on the sidewalk than at nine a. m.!

The roar of traffic did not wholly drown the faint notes from the *Herald* clock. Chick quickened his step, and before the last stroke sounded he turned the corner at the Metropole and—confronted Doctor Menlow!

At least, nobody who knew the hypnotist well would have doubted that it was he. His hair, beard, high coloring, and even his sparkling eyes—although somewhat disfigured by the big spectacles he wore—could not be mistaken.

Chick put out his hand and smiled all over his handsome face.

"Well, well!" he ejaculated. "In town?"

"My dear boy!" exclaimed the other, in return, and his greeting was no less warm than Chick's own. "Who'd have thought of seeing you to-day?"

"A happy meeting," Chick returned, smiling. "I've a particular word to say to you, doctor."

"Have you, my boy? Then come over while I eat my breakfast. We can talk at table. I guarantee no interference in the chop-house at this hour of the day."

They walked beside each other in silence. Chick looked covertly at the figure so perfectly gotten up to represent Doctor Menlow. Had the doctor himself walked up Broadway at that instant he might have had some doubt as to which was himself and which the counterfeit!

But it was good to see his chief and benefactor, even in this guise. Nick, too, was quite delighted to see his protégé and chief assistant; but there was too much at stake for him to make any demonstration that might lead to his identification by a watchful foe.

Ere the great detective had taken to this means of throwing Addison off the scent, he had not known for weeks what it was to be in sure privacy. He was shadowed every step he took. And, more than that, the seer of second sight's power had balked Nick again and again.

The detective was determined to down his bothersome enemy and he could not afford to take the risk of spoiling his design—and his disguise—by letting anybody suspect his identity.

When a man is underground not many of his friends will look for him along Broadway, it is true. But Nick was so well known that to appear in a favorite chop-house, even under these careful circumstances, was a risk.

But they found a quiet corner, and were waited on by a strange man. Neither of the friends unbent in the least, however. It was "Doctor Menlow" and "Mr. Carter" between them all the time—whether the waiter hovered near or not.

"And what have you been doing all this time?" queried Chick, as his companion attacked the hearty breakfast that was placed before him.

"Ah! I? Roaming up and down the earth, seeking whom I might devour," returned the "Doctor," with a grim chuckle.

"I would not suggest that you have any part or

lot with that character in Holy Writ of whom that same is said," laughed Chick.

"Thanks. But I fancy that, in some quarters, certain people might think they saw the devil if they saw *me*," was the reply.

"Anything new?"

"I must admit," said the other, shaking his head and his face clouding for the moment, "that I am not advancing along the lines I planned as fast as I hoped I should."

"Indeed!"

"No. I am disappointed. By the way. Did you know that your friend, Mr. K., and his lady wife, are starting for Europe to-day?"

"Great Scott! No!" exclaimed Chick, seeing instantly what this meant.

"They are. A sudden move. It is something of a secret, I believe."

"And the case is to come up to-morrow!" cried Chick.

"Just so."

"Do you mean that they are not going to appear against the girl?"

"I mean that your charming young friend, Mr. Carter, will probably go free after a day or two. There will be no witnesses against her. It's like these rich people. They've got their jewels back, and they don't want the bother of appearing in court and being bullyragged by a criminal lawyer."

"Whew! Miss Ina certainly was born under a lucky star."

"It would seem so."

Chick looked around, saw that nobody was near, and lowered his voice.

"Should she be watched, do you think?" he asked.

"She *will* be watched," said the disguised Nick grimly. "It looks to me as though it was the only way at present."

"No!"

"I mean it. A. has disappeared completely. Her arrest seems to have given him a scare."

"And that," said Chick quietly, "brings me to the matter on which I was bound to consult you, sir."

"Easy, my boy!"

"Yes! I'll tell it as though you might be interested in a curious case," whispered Chick, barely moving his lips as he played with the cigar he was about to smoke. "All right?"

"Cut away!" advised his superior.

Without any particular show of excitement, and speaking in an ordinary conversational tone, Chick related, in order, all he knew about Alonzo B. Peckham, the dead Doctor Morray's discoveries, Eugene Siddel, and the robbery which had occurred at noon the day before.

His companion made not a single comment until he was done, yet at certain points in his narrative Chick dared not look at his auditor. He felt that Nick would see the same points that he had seen. The story Peckham had told regarding the wonderful discoveries of Morray suggested to both their minds an explanation of Professor Addison's marvelous power —if Addison was this Eugene Siddel who had stolen the apparatus and papers!

But even when Chick had completed the tale "up to date," Nick was a long time silent.

"What is Patsy doing?" demanded the supposed doctor at last.

"He and Danny are following up this peculiar old chap, Crummles, and his servants. It's only a chance shot——"

"The only shot there seemed to be," interrupted the other bruskly.

"So we thought."

"But there may be nothing in it."

"And likewise, what I thought!" muttered Chick.

"You have done exactly right in bringing this to my attention," muttered Nick, leaning across the table.

"I hoped you would approve."

"Something will come of this—mark my words. I believe we have at last got the snake by the tail. And if we have—— Well, we'll snap his head off!" exclaimed Nick, under his breath.

"I see," he added, "that you suspect this Siddel to be another name for our seer of second sight—eh?"

"Quite true," admitted Chick. "I *did* allow my fancy to fly in that direction."

"And it sounds fanciful enough," ruminated Nick. "Yet it is as probable as anything in this whole thing! I am convinced that the fellow has some means of keeping tabs on us never fathomed by yours truly, at least, before. This wonderful invention may explain the whole mystery. Now, one thing more before we separate. Two things, indeed, my boy."

"What are they, sir?" asked the alert Chick.

"I must know more regarding this discovery of Doctor Morray's, more about the theory that Peckham says was explained in those papers. To think that Peckham asked my help weeks ago," he added, under his breath, "and I did not consider it of sufficient importance to look into! Ah, well! We cannot always be right in this world. Well, young man, that

is *one* of these important matters we must further discuss. I must meet Peckham myself and talk with him. It is settled. On the other hand, we must not lose sight of Ina Corrette. We must have her followed from the instant she is freed by the courts. Bear that in mind, Chick, bear it in mind!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JAVELIN.

Patsy was as anxious as Chick himself regarding the possible appearance this morning of "Doctor Menlow" at Forty-second Street and Broadway. But it had been agreed that Chick should have the first chance of meeting the "Doctor."

Had Chick not been successful—had the gentleman in question not shown up, in other words—at eleven o'clock Patsy would have been walking past the flat-iron front of the Metropole Hotel.

Meanwhile Patsy remained at home, and about the time Chick and his superior were having their private confab in the chop-house, the young man received by post the following note, written in a crabbed hand, but on good stationery:

"My Dear Young Friend: Pardon an old man for taking up your time and for being all too prompt in calling upon you to redeem a promise. I find that business may call me away shortly—perhaps within a day or two. I would dearly like to see you again and rivet our acquaintanceship more strongly before I depart. I am an old-fashioned man, and dine at noon. Will you take pot-luck with me at one—call it your luncheon if you like.

"Sincerely, yr. humble servant,
"Israel Crummles."

Patsy read this note through with some amazement. Whatever had been his suspicions of Israel Crummles, the letter aimed to lull them to sleep.

It certainly disarmed suspicion. It did not seem as though a crook masquerading under a disguise would write such an ingenuous letter. Patsy said to himself:

"I'm beginning to believe that we're accusing the old duffer of things he never dreamed of. Now, is that my fault or Chick's? That Chick is a terribly suspicious fellow!

"I wish he was here to read this screed, just the same. And if I am going to lunch with Mr. Crummles at one, I'd best be on my taps.

"Hullo! lunch with him, eh? Hang that Peckham! He's filled my mind with foolishness. He says he was drugged by the man who robbed him—supposedly Eugene Siddel. And, on top of that, he says he believes that Doctor Morray, the originator of this great machine for nosing into people's private affairs, was killed by some slow and insidious poison that the physicians could not counteract.

"Ugh! Nice prospect—I don't think! Suppose he *is* this Siddel and treats me to a prussic-acid cocktail, or strychnine lemon-meringe pie? Wow!"

Patsy was not really convinced that Crummles was a crook, however—at least, that he was the crook in question. The case had its uncertainties, however, and Patsy was letting no chance slip.

"It's me for this date, sure!" he muttered. "Chick won't be back, and I'll have to do what I do off my own bat! If Adelina were home I'll be hanged if I wouldn't ask my wife's advice."

Patsy really felt himself amply able to do the right thing without any advice from Chick. If he had dreamed of the suspicions that really filled Chick's mind, and sent that young man post-haste to find Nick, Patsy would have been more cautious in accepting this invitation to dine with Israel Crummles.

He didn't even tell Danny or Joseph when he left the house where he was going. This was a mistake—indeed, it was a fault.

There were certain rules that Nick Carter had laid down for his assistants—and for himself, indeed—that they were expected to follow implicitly.

One was that at least one other man should always know where each individual could be found at any hour. It was seldom that Nick allowed one man to "go it alone" on a case. He must take somebody else into his confidence at each new move of the game.

This was a wise provision. If circumstances arose to put any of his assistants out of a game, Nick could be sure that one of his mates would be keeping "tabs" on him, and they could easily pick up the thread of the affair.

But here was Patsy, starting off alone for his lunch with old Crummles, and not a word to a soul as to his movements.

The big house in which he had seen the old man housed the noon before looked not so festive when Patsy came to it. The shutters were all closed, save at the windows of that second-floor room which he had seen, and there wasn't a sign of life about the place until after he rang the bell.

"Patsy!" the young man whispered to himself, "per-

haps you're a blooming idiot to come here. I'd as soon look for a feast at the morgue as in this shanty!"

But who should open the door but James. James, as wooden-faced as ever. Evidently the Englishman acted as all-'round servant for Israel Crummles, as well as chauffeur.

Young Mr. Garvan bowed profoundly to the unruffled Briton.

"I warrant you didn't expect to see me so soon again?" he said, with a wink.

"Oh, yes, Hi did, sir," declared James solemnly. "Mr. Crummles, 'e said I was to hexpect you."

"Ain't he here?" asked Patsy.

"'E's a-waitin' for you, sir."

James led the way up-stairs with all the dignity that a person of his pudgy frame and short, duck legs, could assume. Again Patsy was ushered into the great room—half-office, half-library, that had so aroused his curiosity before.

The windowed end of the apartment was bare of floor-covering and littered with papers. The desk-table looked as though it were the work-place of a very busy man. The huge, tiled fireplace was a top-heavy-looking affair, and dominated this end of the room. With the big safe beside it, and the table and Crummles' chair, there was practically nothing else in the line of furniture at that end.

The other half of the room, divided by an imaginary line, had a fine Oriental rug on the floor, a round dining-table, a buffet, chairs to match, a plate closet, and on the walls several pictures, and the shield and sheaf of spears and javelins before mentioned. All these things might have been the ornaments and furniture of a swell room at college—the property of some well-to-do under-grad.

Israel Crummles rose up from behind the desk to greet Patsy as the latter entered. The old man was clad in a flowered dressing-gown that must have seen service in the Ark. It was ink-bespattered and frayed at the cuffs.

He had on a shirt, the bosom of which was ruffled, but was yellow with disuse. That linen must have lain in some drawer for months, and was evidently a belonging of the past. Mr. Crummles seemed to have fixed himself up in great honor of his visitor, or else, as Patsy whispered to himself, "the stage was set with consummate art" to befool him!

"My young friend! Glad my note reached you. I am soon going away, and wished to cement our acquaintanceship before I went. James, what are you waiting for? Tell them to serve the dinner."

"Yessir!" murmured the Englishman, and quietly faded.

"A lone old widower doesn't have much to offer a visitor," said Mr. Crummles cheerfully. "But if you indulge——"

He went to the buffet, where there was an array of decanters and bottles.

"Never," said Patsy fervently. "Just as much obliged."

To himself he muttered: "The old fellow won't work a prussic-acid cocktail off on me, that's sure!"

"Ah! you are a model young man, then?" cackled Crummles.

"That's it. And they busted the mold after I was made," was Patsy's cheerful response.

"Just as well. Just as well," muttered Crummles. "Liquor is not for the young—they don't need it. But it cheers the cold heart of us old fellows," and he tossed off a glass of something which he poured from a decanter."

"That might be corn-juice," thought Patsy. "Then again it might be weak tea."

Mr. Garvan's eyes meanwhile had scrutinized the place pretty thoroughly. Little escaped his eagle glance.

"That's a nifty bunch of stickers you've got up there," he said, nodding at the shield and spears. "Collect 'em from your enemies, Mr. Crummles?"

"Not in my own person," returned the old man, with a grim chuckle. "They *are* rather interesting," and he moved toward the hanging trophies.

"Here's a shield that went with the Crusaders into Palestine, it is said. And it stayed there for some time. It was brought back from Asia Minor only a few years ago.

"The spears and knives are much more modern. Here's a creese, from the Malayan peninsular. This spear with the broken shaft was carried by a Bedouin. This black-handled weapon came from some head-hunting tribe in the interior of South America. Now, this—ah! be careful."

Patsy had taken down a smaller javelin, and a sheath which masked its keen blade slipped off and fell to the floor.

"Don't touch that, sir!" commanded Crummles, with nervousness. "It may not be true; but it is said a cut from that point is fatal."

"Nice!" exclaimed Patsy, backing away. "Why so?"

"See the dark stain on the blue steel point? Runs back about an inch. They say that point has been

dipped in poison—the deadliest irritant known. A scratch to bring blood is fatal—no doubt of it!"

"Gee!" muttered Patsy.

"I keep the point sheathed. I ought to get rid of the thing, I suppose," said Crummles reflectively. "I wonder if firing the blade would kill the poison? I hate to lose it from my collection."

He put on the sheath carefully and put the javelin back in its place. James, bearing a huge tray of plates and knives and forks entered, and Patsy and his host stepped out of the way while the cloth was being laid.

The young man lost nothing that was going on. James and his master could not pass any "high sign" without Patsy Garvan seeing it.

He was on the watch for a jolt of some kind; but nothing arrived. He began to believe that his suspicions of old Crummles and his serving-man were entirely unfounded; nevertheless, he did not ease up on the cautious pedal!

Besides, it would seem that if Mr. Crummles was playing a part and wished to get Patsy into his hands, he would have made this date at night. Plenty of people had seen the young man come into the house. A shout, or the smashing of one of the windows, would immediately attract a crowd—and these windows were on the street.

No, Patsy felt more and more confident that he had merely run up against a peculiar character, and that there was no connection between Mr. Israel Crummles and the robbery of the papers from Mr. Alonzo B. Peckham's office in the Bridgeman Tile Company building.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. PECKHAM IS VERY MUCH STARTLED.

Mr. Peckham's office, on the seventh floor of the Bridgeman Tile Company building, was a modest apartment. Besides the closet where the set-bowl and running water was, the office consisted of but one large room.

Mr. Peckham sat gloomily before his desk on this afternoon when the door opened, and he looked up with a start, to see who his visitor might be. Not that he feared to lose anything by robbery, now that the very valuable papers left in his care had gone, but naturally Mr. Peckham's nerves were overstrained.

"Ah! Mr. Chickering Carter!" he exclaimed, rising quickly to offer the newcomer his hand.

The latter came in, looked quickly about the room, grasped the gentleman's hand, and sat quietly down near Mr. Peckham's own chair.

Peckham could not help but noticing the strong, clean-shaven face of his visitor, his keen eyes, and the snug way in which his coat fitted over his muscular torso.

Chick Carter seemed to find some interest at first in the room and its furnishings, and while the ordinary comments of weather, etc., were being passed, his eyes were never still.

"You are alone here, Mr. Peckham?" asked Chick.

"At present—yes, sir."

"No clerk?"

"No. I had one but he had a better offer, and I have not suited myself yet. Frankly, real estate is dull at this time. I thought I would wait till business picked up before paying clerk hire. But I wish to goodness I had not been so stingy."

"Meaning?"

"Why, then somebody else would have been here and that scoundrel would not have robbed me."

"I don't know about that," said his visitor. "He seems to have been a very sharp thief. He laid his plans which resulted in your loss with consummate skill. He would have found some way of getting your clerk off watch."

"Perhaps, as you say. However, the papers are gone, and I tell you frankly, Mr. Carter, I am pretty nearly worried to death over it!"

"You are worried, Mr. Peckham, because they were entrusted to you, and they constitute, as you believe, a large competence for the heirs of Professor Morray?" queried the other.

Peckham flashed a sudden look of surprise at him. In his own mind a puzzling question was given birth. How was it Mr. Chickering Carter seemed so much different here in his office than he had when Peckham had called at the house of the late Nick Carter and found his young assistant in charge?

The query was fleeting, however. The inquiry that Chick Carter had made was sufficient to start Peckham off on a more troubled line of thought.

"My goodness, Mr. Carter!" he exclaimed. "It isn't only that. I have a deep interest in the Morrays. I feel, too, that I must be culpable in some degree, for allowing myself to be robbed.

"But there is a deeper significance than the mere loss of possible fortune to the heirs of my old friend, Doctor, or Professor, Morray. Remember what I 'old you regarding the theory he had established

logically in his writings. It is a marvelous discovery, and in the hands of unscrupulous persons could be turned to vicious account—beyond our dreams of horror, Mr. Carter!

"Think of it! If Siddel has the apparatus built according to Morray's specifications, and knows, from his study of the papers now stolen, just how to use the apparatus—— Great heavens, Mr. Carter! what might he not do with this great power for good or evil?"

"Certainly, we cannot expect him to do good with it," said the visitor calmly.

"No, sir!"

"Not if he is the bad man you say he is."

"Eugene Siddel?"

"Yes. I mean him."

"Why, Mr. Carter! he is a thief!" cried Peckham.

"You know positively that he stole the machine that Professor Morray had built?"

"Siddell built it. Doctor Morray told me himself that he did. Then the doctor was stricken with this strange sickness. I *know* the old man believed himself to be poisoned—— Ah! look what Siddel did to *me* right in this office yesterday."

"Ah! you refer to your smoking the drugged cigar?"

"I do indeed."

"He must have a great knowledge of poisons."

"Siddel?"

"Of course. If he was the man who robbed you."

"Why, who else would do so? Siddell or a confederate, to be sure!"

"Well, well!"

"As for his knowledge of chemistry, and poisons—well, the doctor confessed to me that Siddel was the most intelligent assistant he had ever had."

"But he did not trust the man?"

"Why—in ordinary things—yes."

"But not with this new discovery that he had worked out?"

"No indeed! Doctor Morray had trusted nobody with particulars of that. He used to speak in a general way of the theory to his personal friends—like my father, for instance. *He* used to declare that Doctor Morray was cracked on just one point, and that was it. My father held the belief that no man can be a genius without having some insane streak in his mental make-up."

"Perhaps there is much wisdom in that," admitted the visitor reflectively.

"At any rate, the doctor did not trust Eugene Siddel fully."

"And yet he used him in his work?"

"Oh, yes! Siddel built a machine according to certain specifications. But he did not know the whys and wherefores of the mechanism. Do you understand, Mr. Carter?"

"I think I do. Professor Morray kept from his assistant the fundamental principles of his discovery."

"That is it. The machine was built and Siddel, I believe, saw it worked. He learned how to apply the ray, or whatever this may be called so as to establish communication through solid objects.

"For instance," said Peckham earnestly, "the machine might be in yonder room. Siddel—or somebody else in charge of it—might wish to know what was going on in here—in this very office," continued the real-estate speculator, lowering his voice.

"See you, Mr. Carter! It sounds like a crazy dream, I know! I doubted my own sanity when I had studied those papers and pieced together the wonderful theory that the doctor had originated. *But it is true!*

"If Siddel was there and wished to see us and overhear our conversation, he could do so! He could, sir, as sure as you and I are alive this moment! The X-ray is no more marvelous. Think of a medical practitioner being able to see into the very vitals of his patient with that marvelous discovery! Is it not wonderful? Twenty-five years ago would its possibility not have been vigorously denied by the most eminent scientists of the world?

"Then, think of this Morray discovery. It is a ray, too. It penetrates everything—anything. Walls, wood, brick, ice, stone, space—— Ah, ha, Mr. Carter! Is it not enough to make one's head swim to think of its possibilities?" cried the excited Peckham.

"This Siddel, if he had the machine in the next room, could see us sitting here, and hear what we say together! He could even take a photograph of us—a picture that would be recognizable. He could record upon a phonographic arrangement our utterances. Heavens, man! There is no end to the possibilities of the ray when the mechanism is perfected."

"It is *not* perfected, then?" interrupted the visitor, restraining himself with an effort.

His own eyes sparkled, a flush had come into his cheeks. Anybody who knew Chickering Carter well would have marked the change that had come over his

countenance. There was a look there then that had never been born in Chick's countenance!

"Not in detail. Some of Doctor Morray's assumptions have not been worked out to the full. He admits that himself. But the first machine was workable, and Siddel saw its possibilities without doubt.

"The scoundrel, I verily believe, stole the apparatus from his master, and poisoned the doctor, too. He sat where you do now, Mr. Chickering Carter, only yesterday and diabolically drugged me——"

"Wait one moment!" remarked the visitor hastily.

"What is it, sir?"

"You are making a slight error in your calculations, Mr. Peckham."

"As how, sir?"

"You have several times called me Chickering Carter," said the visitor, eying Peckham with a direct gaze that made that gentleman suddenly sit up and take notice.

"Wha—what do you mean?" cried Peckham, in shaking voice. "Are you not the gentleman I called on yesterday at Mr. Nicholas Carter's house?"

"Your eyesight must be failing you, Mr. Peckham," said the other coolly. "I am *not* the man you saw yesterday at the late Mr. Carter's residence."

"Merciful heavens!" cried Peckham, half-rising from the chair.

"Sit down, Mr. Peckham!" commanded the other.

"Who are you, sir?" cried Peckham, glaring at him.

His visitor leaned forward and suddenly pressed him back into his chair with a strong hand upon his breast.

"Be still, sir!" he ordered sternly. "Don't cry out like that. There may be no wonderful machine in either of these next rooms to overhear our conversation and record it, but there may be eavesdroppers, nevertheless."

"I—I——"

"Stop it!" commanded the other warningly. "Listen to me. You are mistaken in my identity. I am *not* Chickering Carter."

"Who—who in Heaven's name are you, then?" whispered the pale-lipped Peckham.

The other leaned nearer. A grim smile hovered about his lips. He uttered a name in the trembling man's ear.

The shock was too much for Mr. Alonzo Peckham. He flung up his hands, shrieked like a cornered rat, and fell sideways out of his chair to the floor—in a swoon.

CHAPTER X.

PATSY HAS HIS HANDS FULL!

It was with renewed confidence that Patsy Garvan, Nick Carter's young assistant, sat down to table opposite Mr. Israel Crummles. James came behind the visitor and pushed the chair into place.

And then it was, as Patsy sat down and eyed his vis-à-vis quizzically over the steaming soup, that he got the shock of his life!

The table and chairs were heavy and at first glance Patsy had estimated that they had "cost a heap of money." The chair he was in rolled on castors.

When James pushed him up to the table, the arms of the chair struck the table, there was a loud click, and the visitor flung himself back only to find that he was *locked into his seat!*

The chair-arms had found their sockets in the table and were automatically locked. So close was Patsy's body to the table edge that he could not easily wriggle down to escape, or draw himself upwards.

And it was all done so suddenly and unexpectedly!

"Sit still, Mr. Garvan!" commanded Crummles sharply. "Sit still, or I shall consider it necessary to restrain you further."

There was a small chuckle behind him. Patsy knew that the wooden-faced James had, for the moment, "let his face slip." The supposed serving-man certainly enjoyed his surprise.

But Patsy was nothing if not cool-headed. He saw that he was in for trouble and that he was helpless. He was armed, but he could not have reached his gun to save his life—not without drawing the attention of his "host" at least.

Patsy had a fund of impudence that even this situation could not quench.

He glanced into Crummles' face and grinned, and, so grinning, looked up at James.

"Do you mind passing me the red pepper, my man?" he said. "It's good for the stomach and I like my soup hot."

James was astounded, and stood for a moment with open mouth.

"James!" exclaimed Crummles warningly.

The serving-man woke to his master's cry and instantly served as though nothing out of the way had occurred and Patsy was *not* locked into the chair.

He handed the guest the pepper-shaker. Patsy used the condiment with unmoved countenance. But as his fingers gripped the glass bottle, which was well filled with the ground cayenne, a sharp thought came to him

—a thought which he put aside at the moment, but did not forget.

"I am well entertained to see you take your position so philosophically, sir," said Crummles, playing with his own spoon and eying Patsy with a malevolent grin.

"I fancied I would surprise you," chuckled Patsy.

It took some pluck for Patsy to keep up his appearance of ease. It took far more for him to down the first mouthful of soup he put to his lips.

Suppose the stuff should be poisoned! Peckham's story of Doctor Morray's death, and of how he himself had been drugged, had impressed Patsy quite as much as Chick.

And now Patsy was sure that this Israel Crummles, whether he was Siddel or not, was the man who had robbed Peckham the day before.

Chance had flung Patsy into the man's company just as he was escaping from the Bridgeman Tile Company building after the robbery. He had known Patsy at first sight, and had played the shrewdest of shrewd games in getting the young assistant of Nick Carter away from the scene of the robbery for the time being.

And now he had discovered that Patsy was more interested than a little in his affairs. Perhaps he had learned that inquiries were being made in the neighborhood by Patsy the night before.

Possibly Danny had not hoodwinked the wooden-faced James, after all. James might have brought his master word of the interview he had had with Danny.

Meanwhile he calmly and deliberately ate the soup, spoonful after spoonful, the stuff tasting as bitter as gall and wormwood to him, since, for all he knew, he was being poisoned with every mouthful.

"But hang his old hide!" thought Patsy, "he sha'n't have the satisfaction of saying that I showed any yellow streak."

Therefore he ate the soup and made "small-talk" as though he were quite used to eating his meals locked into a combination chair like this one he was held in.

"Thank you! I will take a bit of bread, sir," chattered Patsy. "It was just out of my reach. This is remarkably good butter, Mr. Crummles. An excellent plate of soup, sir."

Crummles watched him with a frown, but he grunted out a word now and then. He said:

"You don't seem to appreciate your situation, sir."

"My, my! Do I show any ill-breeding in that way?" exclaimed Patsy. "I assure you, Mr. Crummles, I am overpowered—fairly overpowered!—by the honor conferred upon me."

"It is evident that you are a cool young man, Mr. Garvan," said the old scoundrel. "But you may not get out of that chair—with your life, sir!"

"Whew!" exclaimed the young man. "You call me cool? If you talk like that I'll be cooler still, so I will! My very blood will run cold in my veins! Sure, Mr. Crummles, you don't mean it?"

"I *do* mean it. I know what and who you are, Mr. Garvan."

"Oh, I'm a popular character," returned Patsy airily.

"And I allow nobody ever connected with Nick Carter to ask questions about me without looking him up," snapped Mr. Crummles, with a vicious snap of his jaws.

"Wow, wow, says the fox! Is *that* what's troubling you?"

"It is troubling *you*, just now, young man," said his captor grimly.

Then he turned to James, who had carefully removed the soup and brought the roast and potatoes:

"Put on the wine and leave us."

Patsy was not alone fearful for himself; but he was full as he could hold of curiosity! The actions and speech of the man puzzled him mightily.

Remembering Peckham's story, he believed Crummles must be Eugene Siddel, the man who had worked in Doctor Morray's laboratory and had stolen the machine and formula relating to the scientist's wonderful discovery. That being the case, why was he doing all this?

"He might have had me shot if he believed I was shadowing him. Why does he work *this* game on me?" ruminated the puzzled Patsy.

"I know that you men who worked for Nick Carter are very smart young fellows, Mr. Garvan," began Crummles, as we will continue to call him, when the serving-man had left the room. "You had excellent training under Carter. I always admired his methods and work.

"But let me tell you, that when you try to buck up against *me* you are taking on a task with stomach to it, and no mistake! Had your chief not gone the way of all flesh, he would have found his match in me as well.

"Oh! yes, he would! I am one who sees what others do not. I have a power you know not of. You think you and your mate, the chauffeur, were very cautious in your inquiries regarding me. But I know all you did last evening.

"And I warrant you found out nothing about me—nothing I did not want you to know, I mean. Your

persistence might be dangerous in time, however, and for that reason I asked you here, and now have you in my power. * * * Do take another piece of beef, Mr. Garvan."

"I don't care if I do," returned Patsy coolly. "You were saying——"

"Gad! I admire your nerve, young sir!"

"You mentioned that before," grumbled Patsy.

Crummles went on:

"I want information from you, Mr. Garvan."

"Yes!" drawled Patsy.

"I do indeed. And I am going to get it—mark that, sir!"

Patsy said nothing, but ate as though his appetite was extremely good. As far as taste went, however, he might have been chewing shredded dish-rags!

"There have been some things regarding Nick Carter's death that I never understood," said the man across the table reflectively. "I stood beside his grave when the coffin was lowered into it, and I saw his face in the coffin a minute before. I know that Nick Carter's body was buried, but I have always felt a certain amount of uncertainty regarding his death because of something that happened almost immediately thereafter.

"I am, Mr. Garvan, a man with a wonderful power. Do you understand me, sir? I have ways of finding out the secret processes of the human mind—the very thoughts you never breathe, even, to your closest friend! You do not know me, Mr. Garvan, or you would not have so carelessly put yourself in my power."

Patsy had been taking particular notice of his speech and manner and gradually a dawning perception of the whole situation broke over his troubled mind.

Whether Crummles was Eugene Siddel or not, Patsy was sure that he had masqueraded in another character of late. He was sure of it!

"You do not know me," began the man again, when the young fellow interrupted him:

"Oh, yes, I do, mister!"

"What's that? You are aware of my identity?"

"I won't say as to that, but I'm not wholly at sea about you," Patsy declared. "You haven't always been Mr. Israel Crummles. The last I heard of you, I reckon, you were going around giving side-shows in which you put a certain young lady to sleep and worked on her mind till you made her tell some pretty strange things—eh? I see I'm right. You are the great Professor Addison, X. Y. Z.—eh?"

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed his captor. "So you are smart!"

"Very," admitted Patsy, with becoming modesty.

"I am that man whom you know as Professor Addison, the seer of second sight. Who I *really* am——"

"Then neither Israel Crummles nor Eugene Siddel is your right name, eh?" interrupted Patsy. "I must say you are getting a string of aliases. They'll occupy quite a space under your picture down at headquarters."

"So you believe I shall be caught, do you?" sneered the man.

"Sure!"

"And with Nick Carter in his grave?"

Patsy dropped his knife and fork and scowled into the man's face in return.

"I see that you glory in the fact that Mr. Carter is no more—and well you may," growled the young man. "It's a different tune you'd be singing if he were alive—and in my place, for instance!"

"Ah!"

The man leaped up with a great show of wrath. He rushed to the end wall of the room and tore down one of the spears arranged there with the shield.

He poised this across the table at Patsy's heart, his eyes glittering, his face working with rage.

"If you were Nick Carter, I would give you no chance for life at all!" he cried. "This javelin——"

He looked at the point from which the sheath had fallen. It was the poisoned spear he held.

"Ah, ha! A prick from this, and where would Nick Carter be? And where will *you* be if I touch you with it?" he demanded, grinning like an enraged ape, and thrusting the stained point of the weapon nearer and nearer to Patsy's face.

But the brave fellow would not budge; he would not draw back. His eyes were mere sparks of fire, his lips were pale, and his breath came shortly as he gazed into the rage-inflamed features of his captor, as the latter thrust the poisoned spear nearer and nearer.

There was no yellow streak in Patsy!

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHANGELING.

That Patsy Garvan was in deadly peril, there could be no doubt. Addison, or Siddel, or Crummles—whichever one preferred to call him—had been taunted to ungovernable fury, and there was murder in his

heart. Patsy was never nearer death than at that moment.

Had he made a move to draw the gun that was in his hip-pocket, the poisoned javelin would doubtless have reached a vital spot in his anatomy.

Patsy leaned slightly forward, his hands on the table, and stared back into Crummles' eyes. His right hand, seemingly by chance, gripped the pepper-shaker that James had passed him early in the meal.

At the very moment Patsy had gained first possession of this pepper-shaker, he realized that it constituted a make-shift weapon of defense that Crummles would not be expecting.

It was well filled with cayenne. Patsy had succeeded in unscrewing the top until, at a slight jar, it would fall off and the pungent condiment would pour out in a full stream.

As Crummles pressed the point of the fatal javelin nearer and nearer to Patsy's face, the latter drew a deep breath and his fingers tightened on the little cut-glass object.

He was about to lift it and hurl its contents straight into the face and eyes of the scoundrel, when an unexpected interruption occurred. Perhaps this interruption saved Patsy's life. It certainly saved Crummles' eyesight!

The door opened and James, he of the wooden face, entered softly.

"What the devil!" roared Crummles, starting up, javelin in hand, and almost on the point of flinging it at his serving-man.

"Hi beg pawdon, sir," said James quietly. "There is a gentleman at the door as says 'e must see you."

"What's this? What's this?" cried Crummles. "Who would come to see me? Who knows me hereabouts? Nonsense! you have allowed some impudent agent or pedler in the house—you fool!"

"Hi beg pawdon, sir! Not at hall!" declared James, with—for him—warmth. "'E says hit is very important, sir, and that Hi'd lose my situation, sir, if I didn't tell you."

Crummles had lowered his weapon; but Patsy, although he breathed more freely, drew the pepper-shaker before him.

"Who can he be?" growled Crummles, looking at his man uncertainly.

"'E is an old gentleman, sir. 'E isn't strong, I should say. But 'e's perfectly respectable."

"To the dogs with his respectability!" growled Crummles.

He looked swiftly about the room, as though uncertain in his mind. He whispered, but to himself, not to his companions:

"Only place in the house where I can see him! Who the devil——"

James had stepped nearer to Patsy's left-hand, which the youth had allowed to fall to his lap. Suddenly the prisoner was astounded to see James' hand reaching for his idle one.

Swiftly, but accurately, the fingers of the supposed serving-man spelled a message on Patsy's palm. He used the alphabet taught to deaf, dumb, and blind people—a language known to every member of Nick Carter's famous family!

"Gee!" ejaculated Patsy, and spilled the red pepper on the table-cloth.

"Achoo! achoo!" he sneezed the next moment, the tears running down his face.

Crummles started, swore, and then sneezed loud and long himself. The atmosphere was impregnated with the pepper.

"Pick that cloth right up by the four corners and take it all out—achoo!—into the other room, James!" commanded Crummles, choking and spluttering.

James, as wooden-faced as a tobacco sign, did not even sneeze. Patsy knew why. The fellow was holding his breath.

He did neatly and well what he was told, and as Patsy, through his tears, watched him waddle through the door, he marveled greatly.

For it was not James at all!

The fingers on his palm had signaled:

"Hold on! You're safe! I'm Danny."

"And by the same token, Danny, you're a wonder!" thought Patsy. "I'd never believed it was in you. Chick had a hand in *that* make-up, or I'm a liar!"

But in a moment he had his own troubles again to think of. He saw that his friends had—in some mysterious way—discovered where he was, and had evidently come to his aid in the nick of time.

Danny had taken James' place as servant—and a very creditable representation of James he made—and possibly Chick was also in the house.

But the moment Danny left the room Crummles got to work on Patsy. He whipped out a silk handkerchief and effectually gagged his prisoner with it.

The bare table, into which the arms of Patsy's chair locked, was evidently a mechanical contrivance of the man's own invention. Peckham had declared that Doctor Morray found Eugene Siddel a marvelously good mechanic as well as laboratory assistant.

This strange being was evidently one of those men

with brilliant minds, and more than one well-developed talent, but who put all their gifts to bad uses.

Crummles had elected to be a crook, and he had undoubtedly gained some knowledge of Doctor Morray's wonderful theory and discovery, and was determined to put that to a bad use, too. At present he amused himself showing Patsy how useful the chair and table were as a prison.

The table "broke" in the middle where it would naturally be separated for the insertion of "leaves" to make it larger. One-half of it the man rolled to the wall, dropped a cover over it, and it looked like an ordinary side-table.

The other half, and the chair locked to it, he rolled into a far corner, moved a high screen before it, and Patsy was out of sight.

It was utterly impossible for the youth to make his escape from this queer prison-frame. His hands and feet were both free; but so ingeniously were the chair and table edge locked together, that Patsy could not escape at all!

And when he put up his hands to untie the knot of the silk handkerchief, and so free his tongue of the gag, he found the glaring eyes of his captor looking over the top of the screen at him.

"I thought so!" muttered Crummles. "Not willing to let well enough alone—eh?"

He came around the screen again, seized the prisoner's wrists, and snapped upon them a pair of patent handcuffs, fastened together by a single link. Patsy found himself indeed helpless!

At the moment the disguised Danny entered the room.

"Tell the fool, whoever he is, that I'll see him," commanded Crummles, walking to the front end of the room where the floor was bare and littered with papers.

He seated himself behind his table and Patsy, through an aperture between two leaves of the screen, saw that he had taken the poisoned javelin with him and that it stood beside his chair, shaft up, within easy reach of the villain's hand.

The fact that Crummles had the weapon troubled Patsy enormously. What might he not do with it if he suspected the identity of the disguised Danny, or of the person now being shown into the room?

And then, at the very instant the door opened and the visitor entered. It was lucky that Patsy's tongue was tied! He surely would have cried out in his amazement.

The man who entered was Doctor Menlow, the old hypnotist, the old-time friend of Nick Carter!

Had Patsy been watching the face of the man beside the table at that moment, he would have seen him start and half-rise from his chair.

And if Doctor Menlow himself noticed Crummles' disturbance of mind he gave no sign.

In truth, the crook recognized instantly the dignified-looking old gentleman who had taken such a prominent part in the ceremonies when Nick Carter was supposedly buried. Doctor Menlow's appearance here amazed and frightened Crummles.

On Patsy's part, he was startled, for an entirely different reason. He knew that Nick Carter, not dead at all, was masquerading as Doctor Menlow, while the real man of that name was making a tour of Europe.

Patsy knew that Chick had gone forth to meet Nick Carter that forenoon, and as Chick had not returned to the house, the young fellow was assured that he had met the chief.

Nick seemed to have taken up the case instantly—and his presence here went to show that he was occupying his old-time prominence in the game.

With the supposed Doctor Menlow there also entered James. Doctor Menlow gave the serving-man a peculiar look as they came in and James shrank away and walked to the farther end of the room. Patsy believed that the disguised Danny had received his orders to stay in reach, and that Nick expected a fight with the criminal before him.

"And to think of me not being in it!" thought Patsy, troubled indeed in his mind.

The supposed Doctor Menlow walked briskly to the table and bowed to Crummles.

"Mr. Israel Crummles?" he asked.

"That's my name," growled the other, looking up at him from under his beetling brows. "What do you want?"

"Do you know me, sir?" asked the visitor.

"No, I don't. Not by name. I don't know as I want to," replied the man ungraciously.

"Tut, tut! That doesn't sound friendly."

"I'm not sure that I feel friendly," grunted the criminal, biting off the end of a cigar and lighting it, coolly.

He did not offer his visitor a weed. The latter smiled, and sat down.

"You should really know me," he said, pushing a card toward his host.

"Dr. Abraham Menlow—heh?" grunted the criminal.

"You should know me," repeated the visitor.

"Why?"

"Because I was a very close friend of Doctor Morray, sir—a very close friend indeed!"

Crummles—or whatever his name was—jumped at that! It hit him where he lived.

"Never heard the name before!" he swore.

"Of Menlow?"

"Or that other, either," swore the man, with an ugly shake of his head, while his fingers gripped the haft of the javelin that leaned against his chair.

Patsy wanted to cry out, he struggled to free himself, but all he succeeded in doing was to make a noise with his feet.

This brought a look from James, who stood where he could see behind the screen. Patsy did not understand that look. The supposedly disguised Danny was pale and he looked dishevcled. Patsy wondered that Crummles had not had his attention called to the slovenly appearance of his "servant." And "James" looked really scared, too!

"Ah! Why endeavor further to hide the truth?" asked the apparent Doctor Menlow easily. "I know all about you, Crummles—or Siddel—or Addison, whichever name you prefer!"

"Curse you!" roared the other, half-rising from his chair again. "What do you mean——"

"Just this!" interrupted the visitor shortly. "I'm on to your game from start to finish. This is about *your* finish, too. First, I'll take those papers you stole yesterday from Peckham and brought here to this house. Then I'll take the machine which, as Eugene Siddel, you stole from Doctor Morray before that poor man's death. *And we may look deeper into his death, too, before we are through with you!*

"Don't start! And don't look at me like that, my man! I've my finger on a pistol-trigger, and the muzzle's aimed at your heart, though you may not see it.

"The game's up, Mr. Addison-Siddel-Crummles! Where are the papers? Ah!" as the cowering man on the other side of the table glanced swiftly and involuntarily at the wall behind him. "They're there, eh? In some secret closet, I suppose? We'll have 'em out!"

"Not much you wont!" muttered the criminal. He flung down his lighted cigar upon the thickly strewn, crumpled papers which covered the floor. There was a flash and a pungent odor of gunpowder, while the flames spread almost instantly about him!

He leaped up, stamping as though trying to put out the flames. His visitor arose, too, uncertain for the instant what to do—not quite sure what the fellow intended.

The flames seemed to burn rapidly toward the wall. Surely there was something beside paper there on the floor to urge the conflagration on. And the smell —and smoke——

Suddenly the arch-criminal flung up his arm. The javelin quivered in his hand as he swung it on high.

"Drop that!" commanded the supposed Doctor Menlow, leaping forward, his pistol coming into sight from his side-pocket.

But the weapon was not aimed at him. Diabolical wrath was expressed in his enemy's writhing features. But his face was toward the cowering servant at the far end of the room.

"You dog, you!" roared the villain. "*You* are at fault for this. So I serve all traitors!"

The javelin left his hand at the cry, and whistled through the air. It smote the cowering James fairly in the breast, and he fell against the wall and so to the floor.

A shriek left Patsy's bleeding lips. He had managed at last to chew through the silk handkerchief.

"Danny! Danny!" he moaned, as he saw the stricken man fall.

But at the moment the supposed Doctor Menlow had come to a realization of another fact. Under the papers on the floor, squirting fire and hissing like a veritable snake, was a fuse!

That was what the criminal Addison had intentionally ignited when he flung his cigar upon the floor.

The sparks flying from the fuse was nearing the wall rapidly. Doctor Menlow suddenly vaulted the table and tried to stamp upon the fuse.

Seizing his opportunity Addison turned and delivered a stunning blow which caught his enemy on the jaw and drove him back from the blazing fuse.

Then Addison recovered himself and shot toward the door into the hall. As he flung it open, somebody was coming up stairs with a rush.

Cursing loudly, Addison turned and ran up-stairs instead of down to escape from the house.

The staggered "Doctor Menlow" tried once more to put out the fuse; but the spark disappeared at the moment into an auger-hole in the mop-board level with the floor.

He staggered back, turning his head from the wall. And well that he did so!

Almost instantly there was a roar, the wall split open, revealing a flaming cavity in which the villain had undoubtedly kept the precious stolen papers, and in a breath the flames had full command of that end of the room!

CHAPTER XII.

DESTRUCTION.

The blow from Addison's fist, and the shock of the explosion, had completely disarranged the disguise which made Addison's recent visitor look like Doctor Menlow. He snatched off the remainder of the beard, wig, and other details, and stood forth, with the background of flame and smoke, as—Chickering Carter!

"For the love of Mike!" croaked a voice in the doorway, and there revealed stood Danny himself. "Is it a bonfire you're having, Mr. Chick?"

"Danny!" shrieked Patsy, from his trap.

He glanced from Danny in his own character to the huddled form which he had believed to be Danny, on the floor.

"All right, my boy," declared the chauffeur. "Ginger! that old thief of the world stuck James for fair!"

"And I thought it was *you!*" murmured Patsy, as the chauffeur and Chick came to his assistance.

"We made James get into his own togs again," explained Chick. "I'm sorry now that I endangered his life by bringing him into the room. He swore his master would kill him if he suspected treachery; but Danny had scared him, too, and he believed he was only choosing between two modes of death."

"And where is the old man?" queried Patsy, as Chick and Danny wrenched the table and chair apart.

"He sneaked up-stairs," said Danny. "I saw him. We'd better put out that fire—or get out—eh, Chick?"

But the fire was beyond their control. The old woodwork of the house burned like tinder.

They picked up the injured James—Chick and Danny—and bore him out upon the sidewalk. Patsy went, too, with his hands rolled in a handkerchief to hide the fact that he was handcuffed. There was no time just then to try and break the mechanism.

The alarm had been sent in already and in a brief time the fire department was at the house. Meanwhile Chick had found a policeman, explained who he was, and sent him around to watch the rear of the burning premises.

There had been nobody else in the house beside Addison, the seer of second sight, or whatever he called himself, James, and the old cook, who had quickly fled. James was already unconscious. His wound did not bleed much, but Patsy explained the nature of it, and the weapon used, to the ambulance surgeon who responded to the call sent in.

They bore poor James off to the hospital; but he succumbed to the poison of the fatal javelin within an hour.

Meanwhile the fire department did all that was possible to put out the conflagration. But the blaze had spread so rapidly before the arrival of the engines that the house was completely gutted.

Addison was not seen to escape!

The policeman sent by Chick to guard the rear declared he saw a figure silhouetted against the flames on the roof of the building. This figure had gone down when the roof fell through the two top floors.

The fact that a man was in the heart of the fire made the department heroes work all the harder to save him and the house, but Addison had laid his plans too well for a holocaust.

When the fire was finally put out it was late in the evening. Chick had sent Patsy and Danny home; but he remained himself to search the ruins.

From the agent of the house he had learned that the man who called himself Israel Crummles had brought into the house some strange-looking cases, besides the big safe which, with the roof, had plunged through the intervening floors to the cellar.

When they could work among the ruins Chick found the wreck of several machines, or part of machines, the uses of which he could not imagine; unless—and this was a reasonable idea—the man had been endeavoring to build other apparatus like that which he had originally built for Professor Morray, and had subsequently stolen from that savant.

In the superficial search which he could make that night, Chick did not find the remains of Professor Addison. But it was pretty positive that the villain had been caught in his own trap and had fallen a victim to the flames.

CHAPTER XIII.

NICK SAYS THE FINAL WORD.

As Chick appeared at the so-called Israel Crummles' house in mid-afternoon of this day, disguised as the eminent Doctor Menlow, the reader can easily guess that Nick himself, just at that time, was masquerading as his first assistant, Chick, in the office of Alonzo B. Peckham in the Bridgeman Tile Company building.

Nick's interest in the discovery made by the late Doctor Morray was overpowering. In the hints Peckham had let drop to Chick and Patsy Nick saw—as did Chick himself—an explanation of the wonderful power Addison, the seer of second sight, seemed to possess.

It was a fact without hope of denial that Addison had kept mysteriously close tabs on Nick Carter and his doings, before the great detective deceived his enemy—and the world at large—by being buried in his grave.

The overpowering desire of Nick's mind and heart was to get the better of Addison and put him behind the prison-bars where he belonged.

If, as Nick suspected, Addison had obtained the writings of the discoverer in connection with his wonderful system, or ray, that would enable one to see and hear—even to take photographs and record the sound of the human voice—through solid walls, and if Addison had in his possession the only known mechanism extant for the developing of that ray, then the villain was the most dangerous crook in the world!

Therefore Nick had exchanged disguises with Chick—rather, he had made Chick up as Doctor Menlow, and assumed Chick's clothing and a wig that made him look quite like his assistant—and had appeared in Peckham's office to sound that individual regarding what he had read of the papers which had been stolen from him the day before.

Knowing that Alonzo Peckham had read Doctor Morray's papers, Nick wished to learn from him every particular he could remember regarding the discovery. To this end he had acknowledged to Peckham who he

really was. The effect of his statement that he was Nick Carter, not Chickering, on the overwrought nerves of Peckham, had not been expected by Nick, however.

He lifted Peckham up, dashed some water in his face, and when he opened his eyes, gave him some of the fluid to drink. Peckham had to be reassured, however, before he could understand that a man whom he had every reason to believe was dead, really sat in his office before him—was talking to him while he, Peckham, pretty nearly stared his eyes out!

When the man had somewhat recovered he was urged by Nick to talk more frankly about the invention, or discovery, of Doctor Morray.

It seemed that Peckham had a retentive memory, as well as sufficient imagination to grasp the details of the dead savant's somewhat complicated logic. And he was thoroughly imbued with a belief in the possibility of Morray's theory.

Nick took ample notes; whether the details as related by Peckham were exact, or not, they were vastly interesting to the detective. But he saw, too, that the information Peckham could give him was so vague in certain particulars that it might take years, yet, for another man to perfect Doctor Morray's ray unless he had before him all the writings of that scientist on the subject, and the mechanism he had had built to develop the ray!

Both these things—the mechanism, and the writings, were now in the dishonest hands of Doctor Morray's ex-assistant—or so they had every reason to believe. That assistant was Professor Addison, the seer of second sight.

Nick, having his own part to play, and having left in Chick's hands the development of other details in the game, made no effort to communicate with his assistants that night.

In the morning, however, he saw by the papers that Israel Crummles was supposed to have been burned to death in the fire that destroyed his house, and that before he cremated himself, in his mad rage he had murdered a pal, supposedly named James Regan.

Nick had assumed a disguise again so perfect that Doctor Menlow's servants were deceived by it, and he was occupying the doctor's out-of-town house. He telegraphed Chick and the boys to meet him at a certain rendezvous near Yonkers that very day, and Chick, Patsy, and Danny were at the spot on time.

When Nick had heard the reports of his young men regarding what had happened in Crummles' house just previous to the fire, he shook his head.

"I don't know what to believe, boys. If Addison, or Crummles, or Siddel—he's a many-named individual—fell a victim to his own wiles and was destroyed in that fire, I'm sorry. It seems rather a tame end for so great a villain. Are you sure of the honesty of your man who stood in the back-yard, Chick?"

"The policeman?"

"That's whom I mean."

"Well," said Chick slowly, "I'm not betting money on it! Nevertheless I do not see why he should have let the fellow escape and then lied about seeing him plunge into the flames."

"It's a pity—it's a pity," said Nick ruminatively.

"I'm not so sure I feel any pity for the rogue," interposed Patsy. "He certainly came near giving me nervous prostration—and so did Danny here."

"I said it was a pity, because we seem to have come to a point where further investigation is impossible," said Nick quietly. "This great theory, or system, originated by Doctor Morray, disappears in mystery with the burning structure that his one-time assistant occupied.

"Addison hid those papers he stole from Peckham in the wall of that room and then made elaborate plans to keep them from ever falling into any other person's hands. Chick hands me here a charred bit of paper which he picked up off the floor after the explosion, which, I know by comparison with a letter Peckham gave me, is in the dead scientist's handwriting. The writings of Doctor Morray are doubtless totally destroyed.

"In addition, Chick has discovered in the ruins parts of machines that he cannot understand the use of. Addison was evidently experimenting in that house with Doctor Morray's mechanism, and trying to build others like it. These machines are destroyed.

"Peckham has told me all he can recall regarding the wonderful discovery the scientist made, but I can easily see that no man, without the doctor's writings and his apparatus, could ever understand the mystery.

"If Addison understood it, he has taken it with him—if he is dead, as we have every reason to suppose. It would be a dangerous power for any man to possess—that of looking through his neighbor's wall and seeing and hearing all that went on there. Perhaps it is as well that the whole affair has so ended."

"And do you consider it ended, sir?" asked Chick.

"It appears to be, doesn't it?"

"Then what about Miss Ina Corrette?" demanded Patsy suddenly.

"She will be admitted to bail, I understand, as the Kennans will not press the charge against her. As her confederate, the great seer of second sight, is no more, I fancy Ina will give us very little trouble."

"And you will come back to us, sir?" cried Danny, delighted.

"Just as soon as I can communicate with Doctor Menlow in Europe and make the necessary arrangements," declared Nick. "With Addison out of the way there seems no further necessity for me to remain underground. I'll appear once more in my usual haunts, and see if all my friends have forgotten me," and Nick Carter laughed.

THE END.

The next number (621) will contain "The Ghost of Nick Carter; or, The Secret of the Second Sight Seer."

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KARL.

By H. J. ALLINGHAM.

Karl had always been an idle boy. He would draw pictures, and he would make little figures in clay, but he would not keep to his book, in spite of many whippings. And so it came to pass that when he was fourteen years old he was the most ignorant boy in all Konigstadt—learned, thoughtful, respectful Konigstadt.

He was taken away from school, and set to work in his uncle's office; but the worthless fellow neglected his master's business, and wasted his master's time.

Of course, this could not go on, and so one day he was told to go about his business. Alas! he had no business. He went home, and his father turned him out of doors. His mother was dead, and there was no one who cared whether he lived or died.

Poor Karl walked down the primly kept High Street of his native town, feeling very miserable, indeed.

Every one who passed seemed to him to be preternaturally solemn and profoundly shocked at his iniquity.

He walked on unthinkingly till he reached the outskirts of the town. Then he paused, turned round, and surveyed Konigstadt with a strange, wistful look on his bright young face.

But suddenly he turned away again and set off hurriedly, and after that he did not once look back.

For two years Konigstadt heard no more of its young scapegrace.

Karl endured many hardships, but eventually he made his way to Italy. To him Italy meant art, beauty, and recognition, and thus faith supported him through many a terrible hour of weary tramping.

If all his hopes were not realized, he did, at any rate, obtain work in a sculptor's studio, and he was happy.

His master was a young, reckless, and improvident man of ability, much given to loose living, but capable in his better moments of doing and seeing good work.

One day he came up to Karl, who was roughly fashioning a group of figures in clay. For a while he stood watching the boy.

The original group was by the Italian himself, and represented a drunken mêlée between four characteristic peasant figures. Karl was copying it.

Suddenly his master spoke.

"Why have you altered the pose of that figure in the foreground?"

"It seemed better so," replied Karl, without turning round, and scarce heeding the interruption.

"By the pope, you are right. It is better so; but why?"

Karl turned now away from his work, and his face flushed. He had forgotten he was in the presence of his master.

"The man is supposed to be drunk," he said hesitatingly, "and a man in liquor—if he falls—does not fall in the same way as a sober man."

The Italian looked at Karl's work, and then said slowly:

"Yes, that's it. Don't copy my work in future. Keep to the 'antique' and the 'life.'"

With that he turned on his heel.

From that day the Italian neglected his work more than ever, and flung himself with increased recklessness into every kind of dissipation.

The end came with bewildering suddenness. He fell a victim to a fever then prevalent, and his constitution, debilitated by every kind of excess, was not strong enough to save him.

Within a week his wasted life came to an end.

People who had advanced him money now came down with a rush to see what they could save from the wreck, and Karl, on his knees by the side of his dead master, heard, but did not heed, the men hurrying to and fro as they emptied the studio of its contents.

Karl followed to the grave the man who, with all his faults, had been a generous and kind master to him.

After that he was alone once more, but he no longer feared his fate. He had learned to believe in himself, and in his own genius.

Still, as he stood alone in the streets of this Italian town, he experienced a strange feeling of homesickness. What would he not give to behold again the quaint buildings of Konigstadt?

As fate would have it, he met that very day a fellow countryman, hailing from a village situated within a mile or so of Karl's native town. From him he learned strange news.

The mayor, in solemn council with the leading bigwigs of Konigstadt, had decided that an ornamental fountain worthy of the wealth and standing of the town should be erected in the market-place. There was to be a competition among artists for the honor of executing this work, and the designs would be judged by the mayor and a committee of leading citizens of Konigstadt.

Karl smiled when he heard this, and wondered what sort of fountain these worthy tradesmen would get for their money in the end. Then the thought occurred to him, why should he not go back to Konigstadt and make the old town famous by designing a fountain which should be a work of art indeed? He had some money in his pocket—plenty, indeed, for the journey, and so why should he hesitate? It never occurred to him that he might not be well received.

It was a terrible winter that year, and it happened that Karl, when within seven miles of his destination, found himself weather-bound at a wayside inn. There he remained for five days, until all his money was gone, spending his time in sketching designs for the wonderful fountain which was to make the name of Karl and of Konigstadt.

When he had spent his last thaler he could enjoy the inn's hospitality no longer, and so, perforce, he set out to brave the weather.

The snow was deep, and the air bitterly cold, and it was late in the afternoon when Karl, weary and chilled to the bone, returned to his native town.

But in spite of his physical discomfort, his heart throbbed within him as the familiar corners and buildings of the old town came one by one within his vision.

There were few people in the streets, and of these none appeared to recognize him.

Karl at length stopped a little lad who was hurrying by, and asked the way to the mayor's residence.

The boy told him, and added:

"You will not find the mayor at home now, though, and I have a doubt if he would see you if he were at home; but he is at the town hall with the committee, judging the designs for the new fountain."

Karl waited to hear no more, but with a firm tread, made his way to the town hall. He knew the building well, and so, brushing past the porter, he leaped up the stairs, flung open the door of the principal committee-room, and entered.

The mayor, in his robes of office—for this was a great occasion—sat at the head of the table, and around him were a number of stupendously solemn and pompous individuals.

But Karl was unabashed.

"Gentlemen," he began; but before he could proceed his eyes met those of the mayor, and he was dumb, for he found himself looking into the face of his father—the father who had never understood him, who had driven him from home.

The mayor turned very red in the face, his eyes glared, and his cheeks swelled with his rage.

In this, the hour of his triumph, with all the great men of the neighborhood around him, to be thus disgraced by his worthless, ne'er-do-well of a son—it was really too bad. And to speak truthfully, Karl looked sadly travel-stained and disreputable—not at all like the son of a mayor.

"Wha'—wha'—what is the meaning of this?" gasped the chief officer of Konigstadt, tears of rage and mortification actually coming into his eyes.

"Sir," replied Karl, recovering his voice, and speaking very calmly, "I have been detained by the snow, or I should have been here before. I bring designs of my own for the new fountain which——"

"How dared you?" shouted the mayor, purple with rage. "This impertinence is beyond anything. Do you know that some of the greatest artists in Germany—in er—er—in the world—have submitted to us their designs for this work? You worthless scamp, this is beyond a joke. You came here to disgrace me, you did, you know you did. Begone at once —at once, do you hear, or—or—I'll have you cast into jail, and—and—begone, sir, do you hear?"

The last words were uttered in a veritable shout.

Poor Karl staggered back a pace, dazed by this unexpected torrent.

He looked round the room. Not one of those sneering faces showed the least sympathy. All were obviously indignant that such a ragged and moneyless creature should have intruded upon their sacred presence.

Then a strange feeling of rage leaped up in poor Karl's breast—the rage of the artist when subjected to the scorn of mere moneyed ignorance. He took a step forward and flung out his hand with a grand gesture of scorn which seemed to take in the whole company.

He opened his lips to speak bitter words of scorn and contempt, but again he met his father's eyes, and he was dumb.

Without a word, he turned on his heel and fled from the place, leaving the distinguished company to smooth its ruffled dignity as best it could; but out in the night again Karl rushed through the town like one possessed. His head throbbed as though it would burst, and his whole frame shook with a wild, impotent rage.

He came to the now deserted market-place, and flung himself down in the snow. As his hand nervously clutched the snow it did not crumble, but remained bound like clay.

Like clay! This put a strange, fantastic idea into his half-crazed mind.

He sprang to his feet, and began heaping up the snow in the middle of the market-square. He worked with feverish haste, and the masses of snow began to take shape under his hands. He felt no cold; his blood coursed through his veins like liquid fire. Hour after hour passed by, and he did not for one moment relax his labors.

It was a bright, clear night, though bitterly cold, and the moon and stars shed their pale light upon the boy—crazed or inspired—working there alone.

The good townsfolk were all fast asleep in their beds, but still the boy worked on at his strange task.

The next day was Sunday, and in the morning, before church, the mayor and a few friends took occasion to make an informal inspection of the proposed site for the new fountain. When they entered the open square there was no one in sight, for this being a purely business part of the town, it was invariably deserted on Sunday. Nevertheless did this group of Konigstadt magnates come to a standstill with one assent and gaze open-mouthed before them.

Well might they do so, for there in the center of the market-place, glistening in the pale morning sunlight, stood a wondrous figure of a lad—white as the surrounding landscape, and as lifelike as a statue of classic Greek.

The mayor and his companions crept toward it, half-afraid.

The figure was roughly fashioned in snow, but it was the work of a master hand. Though but made of perishable snow, it seemed full of life, triumph, and success. About the limbs of the figure coiled a great snake, but the head of the reptile was on the ground, crushed beneath the youth's right foot.

"What does it mean?" asked some one, in awed tones, but no one answered.

Slowly the whole party walked round this strange outcome of the sculptor's art. Then, with a sudden cry of genuine remorse, the mayor fell on his knees in the snow, and caught to his arms the lifeless body of his son.

Karl, having finished his work, had quietly sunk down beside it, and, with all his anger and bitterness forgotten, had passed calmly, with a smile upon his lips, from this world into the next.

To-day there is a beautiful fountain in the market-place of Konigstadt, and it is surmounted by the figure of a youth treading firmly upon the head of a writhing snake. The work is in marble, and men come from afar and near to see it. It bears the name of a great sculptor; but if you ask the people of Konigstadt about it they will tell you this story. If you ask them what the design means, the more intelligent will tell you that the youth represents genius and merit rising triumphant above the greed and ignorant pride of the world.

BARGAINING WITH A BURGLAR.

A group of his friends were discussing William Winslow Sherman, the old banker, who died not long ago.

"He had the coolest nerve of any man I know," said one. "Three or four years ago, when Sherman was an old man and partially crippled by reason of a fall from a horse, he entered his bedroom late at night, to find a masked burglar ransacking it.

"The thief had a big gun trained on Sherman in a minute. The banker just waved it aside with a tired hand. 'Put that away,' he said irritably. 'Let us discuss this matter like gentlemen.' The burglar was so surprised he laughed. 'Now, you could hurt me if you wanted to, and might get away with some little knickknacks,' said Sherman. 'But you might be caught, and there's a slight probability that you could dispose of my toilet articles profitably. What would you consider a fair cash proposition to go away?' They talked it over in all peace.

"The burglar thought he ought to have ten dollars, but Sherman, after inquiring into the man's habits, said eight dollars was enough. 'You see,' he said, 'you're a known thief. If this were your first offense I'd pay you your price, but now the police have your picture, you ought to be glad to accept any fair compromise and run no risk.'

"The burglar finally agreed to take eight dollars. Sherman pulled out a ten-dollar bill. 'Give me two dollars change,' said he. And he got it before he paid."

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